

Understanding Clothing Consumption Choices in Oslo

*Identifying and addressing barriers to sustainable consumption
of clothes*

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1. Introduction

The clothing and textile industry is one of the largest industries in the world. For the production of fibers alone, “132 million metric tons of coal is burned every year and six to nine trillion liters of water are used” (Stone, 2010). Not only has the textile industry been one of the principal causes for the degradation of the ecological environment, but has also played a major role in the obstruction of human rights. The textile and apparel industry alone “employs 412,000 people. In addition, more than 116,000 people are employed by the cotton industry and nearly 27,000 in the manmade fiber industry” (NCTO June 2010). Many of the employed workers in the developing countries earn wages less than a dollar per hour. “Some of the largest exporters of clothing to world markets were among those with the lowest labor costs: China, Indonesia, Pakistan and Vietnam, with labor costs under US\$0.45 per hour” (ILO).

With a population of approximately 5 million people, Norway in 2011 accounted for 16.2 billion NOK worth of clothing imports in one year (Garberg, 2012). According to *Statistics Norway* (SSB, 2012), in 2012, expenditure on clothing and footwear of each household per year was 23,618 NOK. In addition to this, in 1998, 106,000 tones of textile waste came from Norway, with 72 percent of the waste ending up in landfills (SSB, 2001). Therefore, Norway’s contribution to the apparel waste culture does not fall short of any other rich nation. Disposal of textiles, particularly clothing from households, is also a major problem in Norway. With the figures rising each year, any major research or policies aimed strictly at bringing levels of apparel consumption to a significant low, seem to be few, if not missing entirely.

The success of the garment and textile industry has contributed immensely to a culture of mass consumption in Norway. However, the industry’s indiscretion towards

ethics and the environment have been seemingly ignored by consumers. In order to understand the reasons why consumption practices remain unaltered towards sustainable consumption, this study aims to present factors that shape and explain clothing consumption patterns in Oslo. The knowledge, awareness level and attitude of consumers towards their ecological foot print are also presented. The paper further goes on to identify the barriers to sustainable clothing consumption, and concludes with a discussion on how to tactfully address these obstacles.

1.1 Background of the topic

Last year the clothing and textiles industry produced up to 2m tons of waste, 3.1m tons of CO₂ and 70m tons of waste water (Dr Dorothy Maxwell, DEFRA Sustainable Clothing Roadmap 2007).

Every industry involved in the manufacturing of consumer goods from food to clothing, has a direct impact on the environment. The garment and textile industry by this definition is no different. The industry's extensive use of toxic chemicals and water in both the manufacture of textiles and the cultivation of the raw materials has been a cause of much concern. Textiles can be classified as: natural and manufactured. The most commonly used natural raw materials or fibers for the production of apparel include wool, silk, flax and cotton. Whereas, the manufactured fibers are those made either from modifying natural fibers or from chemicals and are known as synthetics, for example the fiber polyester is made from petroleum (Orzada and Moore 2008, p.303). Through the production of clothing the textile industry has not only played a leading role in depleting the Earth from its finite resources (Austgulen 2003), but has also contributed heavily in energy consumption and pollution. Having contributed to innumerable violations against the environment and society, the industry has had a major impact on the destruction of the ozone layer through large scale emission of Green House Gases (GHGs) (Austgulen 2003).

Moreover, due to the labor intensive nature of the work involved, the industry has been guilty of carrying out several social misdemeanors against its work force and society at large. It has been noted that: “20 000 children die each year because of pesticide poisoning in the cotton industry. 80 per cent of children that grow up around cotton farms have damages to the central nervous system” (Austgulen and Stø 2013, p.21). Human rights violations has been a major concern associated with the textile industry for several decades. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) the textile and apparel industry employs on average over 300 million children falling in the age group between 5-17 years, 200 million out of these children have been employed illegally (Plastina 2014).

Given the various tiers within the production and supply chain of the textile industry, identification of the offenders and offences has often been a major problem. However, shortly after the publication of the Brundtland Report (‘Our Common Future’ (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)) followed by the Rio Conferences in 1992, industries started to re-evaluate their practices (Sane 2002, p.274). Consequently, efforts aimed at bringing sustainability into production and consumption of products was advanced. However, debates surrounding the exact definition of sustainability continue to this day. For the purpose of this thesis, I will be using Seidman’s (2007, p.58) explanation of sustainability. Seidman notes, “Sustainability is about much more than our relationship with the environment; it’s about our relationship with ourselves, our communities, and our institutions” (Seidman 2007, p.58). Therefore, concepts and policies geared towards sustainable actions hold great relevance to the textile and apparel industry. As previously noted, the industry is not only guilty of environmental degradation, but has also had a strong social and economic impact particularly in the developing world.

The textile market in Norway is divided into two segments; luxury brands and fast fashion brands. The luxury brands have their production houses mainly in Europe. These brands are engaged in the production of limited high-quality fashion with niche markets. On the contrary, the mass producers of fast fashion have their factories situated in developing countries. Here the production is on a large scale and international markets are supplied with new lines every six to eight weeks (Austgulen and Stø 2013, p.20). The Norwegian clothing market is dominated by imports from such fast fashion brands. “In 2008 the total value of imports of textiles and clothing to Norway was 2.5 billion USD. The main exporting country was China, which accounted for 42 percent of the export to Norway” (Austgulen and Stø 2013, p.20). Increase in the level of imports from developing countries to Norway, occurred around the same time general international regulations on tariffs and quotas began to decline (Austgulen and Stø 2013, p.20).

Today, there are very few clothing production houses in Norway. As most of the clothes in Norway are imported from Asian countries, it becomes difficult for the regulatory authorities in the country to ensure that the clothes being sold (in Norway) are made under conditions of total acceptability. The regulations that the government of Norway impose on the imported clothing is based solely on the chemical content of the clothes. Consideration to the ethical and environmental impact the production (of clothes) has on the country of origin is, therefore, overlooked by the authorities (Austgulen and Stø 2013). According to a report by the National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO), “the Norwegian regulations will for legal and practical reasons primarily apply to things affecting our environment. When it comes to a garment made of cotton in India, the main environment effects would be in the production process(...) and it would be legally and practically difficult-if not necessarily impossible- to prevent anyone from dumping tannery products in Indian

rivers with regulations in Norway(Ministry of Environment)” (Austgulen and Stø 2013, p.24).

The Climate and Pollution Agency (CPA) is the main authority that checks for the chemical content in clothing in Norway. One such certification that is used is the Nordic Swan, “The Nordic Eco-label is the official Eco-label of the Nordic countries and was established in 1989 by the Nordic Council of Ministers with the purpose of providing an environmental labeling scheme that would contribute to more sustainable consumption” (Austgulen, 2013, p.30). The Nordic Swan covers a wide range of products including clothing and textiles. Although quality assurance, eco certification and standards have been established, they have not translated well in practice. Rising levels of clothing items being imported into Norway and disposed off into landfills every year seem to paint a different picture. Therefore, one other objective of the study was to understand the reasons behind this gap.

1.2 Research questions

The purchase of clothes is something each one of us has almost certainly done once in our life. Coming from Pakistan, one of the first things I noticed in Oslo were the innumerable clothing outlets all over the city. This is in total contrast to where I came from, where the majority of clothes are still made by the local tailor. On the other hand, the streets and stores of Oslo always seemed to be full of happy customers, finding joy in the purchase of a new skirt, jacket or dress. At the same time I was also aware of Norway’s progressive environmental policies. The fashion scene in Oslo had gained much media attention for its strikingly bold move to ban fur from the Oslo Fashion Week (Cowles, 2010). Organizations such as the Nordic Initiative Clean and Ethic (NICE) also attracted attention for its efforts at addressing the ethical and

environmental issues within the textile industry. Yet, the surrounding culture within apparel stores reflected no signs of sustainable consumption patterns. It was because of the contrasting pictures that Oslo provided, made it a very interesting city for me to study.

The aim of my research was to understand the reasons *why* people chose to consume apparel. With the main research question being: *What factors determine the way clothes are consumed in Oslo?* My sub questions included exploring factors that determined *why* people shop as frequently as they do? Further inquiries were made on *how* much people know about where their clothes come from? What is the level of awareness and attitude of consumers towards their clothing ecological footprint? Additionally, my research also investigated *what* barriers are hindering the success of sustainable clothing consumption and usage patterns in Oslo? The National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO) has also conducted a similar research on barriers to the success of eco labels (Austgulen, 2013). This thesis also aims to contribute to their study.

In order for me to better understand consumer habits, I also decided to study the production side. Within the past few years there has been a spring of Norwegian sustainable fashion designers entering the market. Yet their popularity amongst consumers seemed to be little in comparison to main stream fast fashion brands. Through my research, I set out to find out the reasons behind this discrepancy. My aim was also to explore the following questions: are consumers of Oslo aware of ecologically and ethically produced clothing (sustainable clothing/fashion) entering the market? If the market for eco-ethical clothing is open for all or is a niche market limited to a few? Why hasn't eco-ethical clothing been inducted into the lifestyles of the masses? Does the problem lie at the sustainable fashion designer's end, or are the consumers not willing or able to make this switch? How are sustainable fashion

designers marketing/advertising their products? What are the challenges they face in doing so? Keeping all of these questions as the point of departure for my study, I set out to conduct my research.

1.3 Methodology

For the purpose of this study qualitative research was employed. A total of 25 participants were involved. Seven of whom took part in a focus group discussion, while the remaining 18 were interviewed face to face. Sixteen out of the 25 participants were consumers; five were sustainable fashion designers, a retailer, a sales and marketing head, an author of a book and a project manager of an online sustainable fashion forum. The interviews were conducted over a period of three months between the ends of September till the middle of December 2013. All of the interviews took place in Oslo. Both the interviews and focus group discussion were in depth and semi-structured. The study was a gendered study, where only Norwegian women consumers were selected. This was a conscious move on my part both for reasons of scope and space in the study and personal interest in studying only female consumers. There were no such requirements for the sustainable fashion designers; however, except for the sales and marketing head, all participants were women.

I divided consumers into three groups, each representing a different age group (17-18 year old high school students, 19-25 year old university students and 40-60year old housewives). The aforementioned focus group discussion consisted of seven high school girls. This focus group was conducted by employing convenience sampling. One of my colleagues at work knew a high school teacher who helped arranged the focus group discussion. One interview of a consumer informant was also made possible through a personal contact of mine. Snowball sampling was also employed in order to get interviews with three sustainable fashion designers. The interviews and

focus group lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours. All, with the exception of one interview, were recorded on a digital voice recorder and transcribed.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the topic. Chapter two gives an overview and analysis of the literature on consumer studies. The literature on consumer studies presented in chapter two helped in the creation of the theoretical context for the study. Chapter three gives a review of the method used in order to collect and analyze the data. Ethical considerations have accompanied the entire study. A discussion of limitations is also provided in chapter three. Chapter four presents the data, with a discussion of the findings being presented in chapter five. Chapter five incorporates the theories presented in chapter two. Lastly, chapter six gives a summary of the findings, and provides possible suggestions for policies aimed at improving sustainable clothing usage and consumption in Oslo.

2. Literature review

This chapter will give an overview of the existing literature on theories of consumption. Doing a literature review helps in the creation of a theoretical context for one's research. This provides the researcher with a clear idea and deeper understanding of what is being studied. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to do a sound analysis of his/her findings with that of the existing literature. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first two sections provide different theories on consumption. It is important to understand that consumers are not a homogenous group. Therefore, consumption patterns cannot be explained on the basis of one theory alone. The various aspects provided in these two sections helped address the diverse nature of consumer choices in a holistic manner. The first section looks at the practice of consumption from a semiotic perspective. I begin by defining what semiotics is and then present a few influential theories on it. These theories explained consumption patterns as a symbolic practice. The next section describes consumption as a social practice. For this Social Practice Theory was used to examine consumption. The literature presented in these sections was reviewed prior to my field work. These theories were used to form the basis of my interview questions and also helped explain *why* and *how* certain factors influenced consumption of clothing in Oslo.

The concepts in the final section helped better address the factors that have hindered sustainable consumption of clothing in Oslo. This section presents literature on the concepts of consumer lock-in and liquid modernity. The literature in this part was reviewed after the completion of my field work. The theory on liquid modernity, presented in this chapter, helped in a better analysis of the extent to which consumers were really free when making consumption choices. Concepts on lock-in, in particular, assisted in the analysis of the barriers to sustainable consumption of

clothing. All of the concepts provided in this chapter were compared against the findings of this research.

2.1 Consumption as a sign

Humanities primary tools of understanding are symbols: words, diagrams, (iconic symbols), mathematical formulas etc. All are arbitrary and conventional and depend on social agreement for their significance (Mick 1986, p.199).

The use of signs and symbols as a means of communicating has been in practice for long. From the wall drawings of the prehistoric man to the designer suits of the high street investment banker, signs are used by people to communicate different messages to the external world. These signs can be in the form of language, clothing, drawings, and so on. The study of signs and the meaning they hold is called semiotics.

“Semiotics aims to study the entire range of the sign system and various processes of communication to which these systems give rise” (Eco 1990, p.ix). Semiotic systems are models which help to explain and construct the world we live in. Philosophers too, over the years, have pondered over and written about the significance of the meaning signs hold. However, it was not until the 20th century that semiotics as a field of study gained relevance and credence, owing much to the works of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce.

Saussure in the early 1900s introduced for the first time to the world the study of signs as a science. According to Saussure, semiology is a study of how meaning is constructed and not what the meaning is. Therefore, semiology refers to a study of what meaning the signs hold and what forces or laws govern them (Mick 1986, p.197). In order to better understand the rules and patterns governing the system of signs, they should be studied in the context in which they appear (synchronic) and the time in which they occur. Not only does this approach highlight the importance of the

background and context under which the sign was formed, but it also brings to notice the differences between the signs that are selected from the ones that are not. In other words, the system of signs is not only static but arbitrary and so stress is put on, “a relational world view whereby meaning derives from the priorities human beings construct and perceive among signs in a system” (Mick 1986, p.197).

The American philosopher C.S Pierce on the other hand broke down the system of signs into three parts and took a triadic approach. Based on this approach semiotics or semiosis is the process of “communication by any type of sign, a sign being anything that stands for something (its object), to somebody (its interpreter), in some respect (its context)” (Mick 1986, p.198). By using the diagram presented below Pierce’s concept on the transfer and exchange of meaning can be better understood.

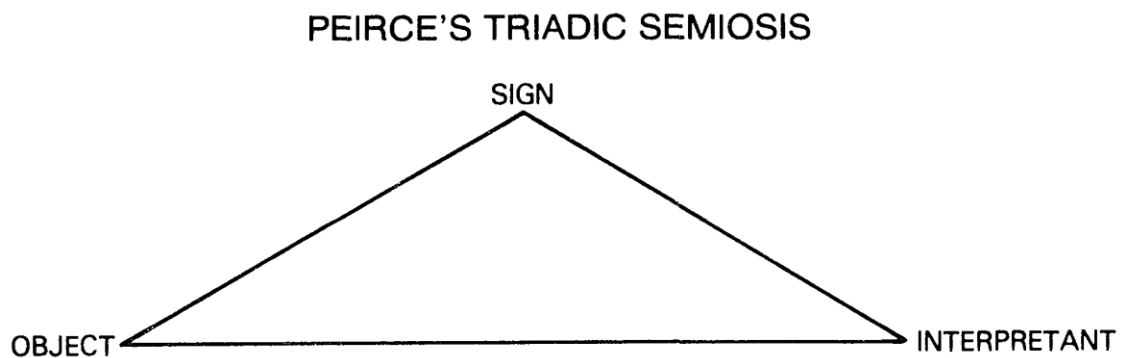


Figure 1: Pierce's triadic semiosis

From Figure 1 we can see that the sign that stands for the object and the interpretant is not only a receiver of this but also reflects or refers back to the sign. As a result of this an endless triadic circulation of semiosis is formed. Signs are understood in the wider social context in which they are situated. According to Pierce all meaning and knowledge is therefore derivative. Signs in the Peircen sense are neutral, they do not

have a positive or negative value but rather derive meaning from the differences and the relationship the sign has with the other signs. The meaning and value they derive is based on the relative position they have in the system of signs. Therefore, in the words of Pierce: “knowledge of the internal world is derived by reasoning from our knowledge of external facts” (Pierce 1931, 5.317).

Both Saussure and Pierce’s theory are important theoretical perspectives for this paper. The study of the system of signs when employed to this thesis can better explain why consumers pick certain clothing items over others. Several studies on modern consumer practices have used semiotics as their method to dig deep into the structures that create and shape consumption (Bocock 1993). With the end of the Second World War studies on modern consumption patterns also began to arise, and the school of structuralists came into being. For structuralists there is no one “truth” or data for evidence of the structures they studied. This does not mean that the conclusions or analysis drawn by using this approach is arbitrary as they are “contributing to a body of systematically ordered knowledge” (Bocock 1993, p.41).

Some of the earlier works that emerged from the structuralists school of thought include the likes of Thorstein Veblen study of the 19th century American consumer, Max Weber’s analysis of a capitalistic Germany in 1905, Levi Strauss’s study of myths and ritual by studying texts of pre literate society and Karl Marx’s earlier work on alienation of the worker. Each of the works looked at the symbolism behind the structures with in society that helped shape or define social groups. For example, Veblen studies the display of wealth of the new elite class or as he calls them the “nouveaux riches” in America during the 19th century. The consumption of goods, for this class, was carried with the aim of showing or symbolizing their ability to afford the riches with which they endowed themselves. “Conspicuous consumption” was the term that Veblen coined in order to reflect this kind of consumption (Bocock 1993).

Veblen's theory on conspicuous consumption is relevant for this thesis as it can give an insight into reasons behind why consumers purchase certain clothing items. The theory suggests that satisfaction does not lie in the direct consumption or usage of an item, but in its possession. These possessions may take the form of owning expensive jewelry, clothing or cars. Such items are, then, displayed on special occasions as a sign to show the society of one's riches. Preferences are thus created and based on the position one has in the social hierarchy.

In the above theories, the individual has been discussed as being a product of the social and cultural forces he/she is embedded in. These forces or structures are studied in the context of a system of signs. Other notable contributions to this field include the works of two French authors during the 1960s and 1980s. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Baudrillard's work on consumption as a symbolic practice is a major contribution to research on consumer behavior. In the book titled *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu's studied the French society after World War two. Like Veblen, Bourdieu has also analyzed the way displays of differences in consumer tastes are used to distinguish one's socio-economic group from the rest of society. Access to economic and intellectual capital determined the class distinction within the society. Bourdieu explains that economic capital was pursued by the business class (the new rich) of the French society. They, like Veblen's 19th century conspicuous consumers, were eager to climb up the social ladder with the aim to "amass money capital, real estate, factories, shops, shares and bonds" (Bocock 1993, p.62). On the other hand, well established families that had "old money" and riches for centuries were those who pursued intellectual capital. They did not believe in the flashing off of wealth and considered it to be tasteless. These were families that would send their children off to universities in order to become cultured in the arts and literature. This way they could begin to appreciate fine art, dining, poetry, philosophy, great reads and so on. They

considered the newly rich as not having finer tastes and used such factor as a means of distinguishing themselves from the self made business class.

Bourdieu's theory is useful when analyzing consumer tastes and preferences.

Bourdieu's views helps to look at consumers as members of a society whose tastes can be influenced by family or peer groups. Unlike the rational, self thinking, utility maximizing economic model of a consumer, Bourdieu emphasizes the role social conditioning plays in determining consumer choices. He says, although there may be rich and poor within a given structure, income or economic factors alone do not only determine consumption patterns. Culture and symbolic factors also play a role in the choices consumers make. "There are structures which have real effects on people but do not determine agents' action, beliefs, values or desires" (Bocock 1993, p.63).

Baudrillard, on the other hand, said that consumption is not based on the class or ethnic group one belongs to. Consumption is not a prewired, innate human or biological need that needs tending to. He argued, when we consume we are not consuming the material object rather what it stands for. Therefore, all consumption is a consumption of signs and symbols, and meaning is derived from the relations between the systems of these signs. Our consumption is based on how we see ourselves and wish to be seen by others. In our attempt to create an identity for ourselves we then base our consumption patterns accordingly. Identity, therefore, is actively created by the consumer. The choices made, "signify that someone is x or y to the person themselves and to others who share the same code of signifiers, the same system of signs and symbols" (Bocock 1993, p.68). Similarities to Piercen's triadic semiosis can then be seen here. Baudrillard states, often it is not even the act of consumption that generates satisfaction, but the anticipation of consuming pushes people further into consuming more and more. He argues that consumption is an "idealist" practice. It is the consumption of signs and ideas, and is not a material

process. “If consumption appears irrepressible, this is because it is a total idealist practice which has no longer anything to do (beyond a certain point) with the satisfaction of needs, nor with the reality principle” (Baudrillard 1988, p.24-5). Therefore, even in times of recession the consumer will still desire to consume. He does not stop being a consumer just because the economy is in recession, because he is not in pursuit of the object itself rather the meaning that comes with possessing it. Therefore, based on the above theories the more a society consumes, the more it desires. The theories presented in this section will be used to develop a greater understanding of the symbolic meaning that comes from the possession of certain clothes. Questions surrounding *how* and *why* consumers in Oslo opt for a particular dress, or shop at a particular store will be addressed through the application of these theories in Chapter five.

2.2 Consumption as a practice

While studying how clothing consumption in Oslo is organized, it is almost impossible not to consider the role of social practices. In order to better understand the composition of what makes a modern consumer, several thinkers have pondered over the meaning and role of practices. However, the consolidation needed for the formation of a homogenous theory on (social) practice is still lacking. A synthesis, therefore, maybe needed between different theorists, but the theories themselves gain strength from the fact that they: “present pluralistic and flexible pictures of the constitution of social life that generally oppose hypostatized unities, root order in local contexts, and/or successfully accommodate complexities, differences and particularities” (Schatzki 1996, p.12). Anthropologists from Bourdieu, Giddens, Schatzki to Reckwitz, have all contributed heavily on this topic in their own ways. Before an explanation of social practice theory is presented, it is important to define what a practice is.

Rekwitz (2002) in his analysis of practice makes a distinction between a practice and practices. He defines a practice as a “routinised type of behavior which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another” (Reckwitz 2002, p.249). These elements may include various forms of bodily and/or mental activities that are connected to different things and their uses. Practices, on the other hand, are “coordinated entities” (Warde 2005, p.134) that require to be performed. Examples might include shopping habits, cooking practices, funeral practices, voting practices, to name a few. In each of these lie sets of individual practice that add up to practices. A practice is therefore, performed by the individual agent under the overarching umbrella of practices. Here, as explained by Rekwitz, the individual then becomes a carrier of a practice and may carry several different practices. The term carrier has been used by Rekwitz to lay emphasis on the fact that the “mental activities of understanding, knowing how and desiring are necessary elements and qualities of a practice in which the single individual participates” and are not the qualities of the individual (Reckwitz 2002, p.250). Therefore, for a single practice to become “practices” they must not only be coordinated, but also require the individual to perform them. In this way, Reckwitz theory is well suited for this thesis when trying to understand clothing consumption practice(s) in Oslo.

The next question that arises is where the knowledge of what to do, say, and how to perform and what rules to follow come from? In other words, how can we explain the human action of consumption and the role of social order in shaping it? Sociologists and anthropologists alike have tried to explain the conditions that help define and determine human action and agency. In doing so, one common conclusion has been passed on the importance of the social and cultural context within which individual action takes place. Social and cultural holists claim:

If one simply examined the actions of individuals without reference to supra-individual settings, such familiar activities as voting, exchanging money, performing a ritual (...) might not make sense. Individual actions and agents may thus only be identifiable and understandable as components of a larger culture and society (Rouse 2007, p.505).

Social Practice theory, takes root from the idea that individual action is studied in the social and cultural structure in which it occurs. However, the extent to which the role social structure plays in determining the individual agents' action is debatable. When trying to explain the power dynamics between the two, Bourdieu talks about what he has termed as the *habitus*. He refers to the *habitus* as the process of the creation of power in a social and cultural context. The creation of the *habitus* takes form through a social process and not through an individualistic act. Therefore, according Bourdieu, the way an individual behaves and thinks is guided through the norms the individual is socialized into learning. "The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1990, p.53). With varying situations and contexts the *habitus* too changes. Not only is it not fixed or permanent, it is also transferable from one context to another. This means that social norms may change over time and vary from context to context. The *habitus*, therefore, is not solely determined by the structure but rather through the interplay between the agent and the structure. Moreover, *habitus* or social norms are highly influenced by past events. They are unconsciously reproduced and perpetuated through the performance of the agent in a given time and place. Hence, through his study of practice and consumer behavior, it can be concluded that knowledge and ways of behaving are not pre wired into a human biologically nor is the individual dictated by structures alone. But rather negotiates and learns behavior from interactions with the structure through the course of time thus, allowing for change to take place as well.

For Anthony Giddens, the patterns that shape social reality are changeable by human agency. In his theory of *sturcuturation*, he tries to resolve the dilemma of the agent/structure debate. According to Giddens people are free in the sense that no predefined identities have been ascribed on them by society, but limited in the sense that they must choose. They have “no choice but to choose” (Giddens 2003, p.387). In other words they are limited by the rules of the structure, but free in terms of the resources available to them within the structure as well. It is this duality that he refers to as the “duality of structures”, where structures and agents cannot be conceived as existing without one another. Therefore, when analyzing consumer action one cannot ignore the existence of structures. People create and maintain these structures and are at the same time constrained by them as well. However, it is the agency of the individuals’ action that helps to also change structure. Hence, action gives structure meaning and vice versa. On the other hand, it does not mean that the individuality or agency of the individual is under mined in any way.

When applying this concept to the study of consumers, Giddens states, consumers are not without knowledge, limited as it may be. It is, however, this tacit knowledge that guides them into the performance and reproduction of structures. This tacit knowledge is then based on past and historical experiences. In Giddens view consumers as capable of thinking for themselves. Which is why, he believes, it is not easy to allure consumers into buying a particular product, as most might think. He states:

People have a similarly skeptical attitude towards ads, by and large. They often switch off or go out of the room while they’re on. They have all sorts of relationships to advertising which mean they’re not simply or directly manipulated by the desire of the advertiser. So, the more you stress manipulation, the less accurate the picture you are providing of how the society and culture work. (Giddens 2003, p.390)

Consumers, in his view, are active and knowing agents who are reflexive in their actions while mediating forces of the social. While brands and corporations may hold

power, it does not mean that consumers are blinded into action by it. “A lot of consumption decisions are individual decisions which belong within the individual sphere of autonomy. There is always a powerful background struggle because people are trying to persuade you to do things and limit your choices or there are structural features which limit your choices” (Giddens 2003, p.395). Consumption, to Giddens, is a private affair which may be guided by society but is not dictated by it. Furthermore, consumption only becomes problematic if it becomes an addiction and consumers cannot refrain from it. Giddens explains:

Consumerism is one element of that, but consumerism is a somewhat slippery notion unless you give it some precision. It can't refer to just any choice; it has to refer more narrowly to the situation of buying a commodity, otherwise it loses its meaning. And buying things is only one aspect of the whole variety of lifestyle decisions which people have to take individually and collectively now. It's an interesting and sometimes pathological aspect of people's relationship to themselves and to the wider culture (Giddens 2003, p.395).

Reckwitz, however, downplays the role of the individuality assigned to the agent in his explanation of practice theory. He studied practices in everyday life by looking at mundane routine practices of people. Unlike his predecessors, Reckwitz says that the social lies within practice itself. This means that individuals are carriers of a practice(s). As there is a multitude of social practices and the agent may carry more than one “the individual is the unique crossing point of practices, of bodily-mental routines” (Reckwitz 2002, p.256). Reckwitz lays emphasizes on the importance of routines and routinized social practices. But, also, cautions his audience of the dynamic nature of practices that can bring about changes in the form of new routines. He states:

Social practices occur in the sequence of time, in repetition; social order is thus basically social reproduction. For practice theory, then, the “breaking” and “shifting” of structures must take place in every day crises of routines, in constellations of interpretative indeterminacy and of the inadequacy of knowledge with which the agent, carrying out a practice, is confronted in the face of a situation (Reckwitz 2002, p.255).

Therefore, when trying to understand consumption patterns by using Reckwitz’s approach, one sees individual patterns of consumption as an accumulation of the times he or she has consumed. The individual consumer is at the intersection point of several practices and acquires items from different practices. Patterns of individual consumption can be analyzed or explained by the volume and quantity of practices. Consumption, based on Reckwitz theory, is not a coherent or standardized practice. “Rather it is partitioned through boundedness within practices” (Warde 2005, p.147).

However, such an approach can be problematic as well. For if individuals carry with them several and varying sets of practices and also come from different social network backgrounds, then, how coherent are these patterns of consumption? Alan Warde in his article, “Consumption and Theories of Practice”, brings this issue to the forefront. He questions the reliability of studying consumption patterns based on Reckwitz theory. Although, Warde validates Reckwitz explanation of practices steering consumption, but also points to the inherent paradox within Reckwitz theory. Warde states, if individuals carry a number of practices then as the number of practices grow and increase the symbolic meaning they hold becomes blurred. Questions of a fragmented identity arise. “People may believe that they are conveying a message through their comportment and adornment, yet this maybe incomprehensible to a large part of the audience which observes the performance” (Warde 2005 p.145). Warde concludes, consumption occurs within and for the purpose of practices and various items are consumed in this process. In his view, there is a common knowledge, understanding and commitment to the practice. Yet people

may perform the same activity differently in different situations, thus reflecting the internally differentiated nature of practices (Warde 2005, p.146).

Practice theories although fragmented in nature, do provide a way into analyzing and understanding the organization of consumption. What is common to all of the theories presented above is the importance of time, space and social context in which the practice occurs. The practical consciousness or the knowledge to carry out a certain task/practice comes from the rules that are set by the social. The individual agent learns these rules through repetitive performance till eventually they form part of his unconscious mind, and he performs them without consciously thinking about actually performing. The repetition of the practice is then dependent on the culture, traditions and rituals of a given structure at a certain time and place. Tacit knowledge is not biologically tuned into the mind, but is learned from the social. As Schatzki says, it is found in particular domains of life which he calls integrated practices. Practices can only continue to exist if performed, in this way, performance “presupposes practice” (Warde 2005, p.134). Therefore, the theories presented till now hold relevance to this thesis when trying to understand the role of habituation and routines play in determining apparel shopping practices.

So far I have looked at the symbolic meaning that objects convey, and the role of the agency of individuals in determining their patterns of consumption in a given structure. What remains to be seen, however, is the role of the agency the objects themselves may possess in establishing individual identity. It is here that I will be drawing on studies on material culture. This part of the chapter will take a brief look at the concept of material culture and its relevance while studying consumption. Material culture looks at the relationship between subjects and objects in defining identity and determining social relationships. The subject refers to

consumers/individuals and the objects are the material items that “people encounter, interact with and use” (Woodward 2007, p.1).

In this way, different cultures can be studied as being products of the interaction and relationship between these subjects and objects. Theories on material culture can be usefully employed to better understand the phenomena of consumer culture in a post modern society (Bauman 2005). The study of these objects of desire can be used in order to understand the organization of the culture of consumption. Moreover, the associations in terms of value and identities that are formed through the use of materials can also be tapped into through the study of objects. In the book, *Understanding Material Culture*, Ian Woodward notes, consumer societies are the meeting point where, “mass produced consumer objects are encountered and used by individuals who must establish and negotiate their own meanings and incorporate such objects into their personal cultural and behavioral repertoires sometimes challenging and sometimes reproducing social structures” (Woodward 2007, p.4). Woodward talks about objects as having the ability to act as markers of value and identity (Woodward 2007, p.6). As makers of value, he credits Bourdieu’s writing on taste as the perfect illustration, of when material objects determine social demarcations as holders of value. Aesthetic taste and cultural values are marked by the objects under possession of one set of class from that of the other. The dominant groups then have the power to define values through their aesthetic tastes, differentiating their choices from the “unaesthetic” (working class) ones. Thus creating and perpetuating class and income differences within a society (Woodward 2007).

As markers of identity, objects help individuals to both identify with their self and also relate to the identity of a group as whole. There are several different social locations where a person’s identity intersects which form relationships with the

objects. Lars Svendsen, explanation of clothes being a marker of personal identity, is perhaps the best illustration of the point made earlier. In his book titled *Fashion-A Philosophy*, he states that: “clothes are a vital part of the social construction of the self. Identity is no longer provided by a tradition, but it is just as much something we have to choose by virtue of the fact that we are consumers” (Svendsen 2006, p.19). Therefore, with regards to clothes and fashion it is no longer just about class distinctions, but about the expression of one’s individuality. He explains due to a fall out or lack of traditions in consumer societies, lifestyles has become hyperactive. Individuals are thus always attempting to form identity and give meaning to their lives. This is where the subjects form relations with objects in their search of the self.

In his book *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Daniel Miller argues that human beings objectify values and meaning through their consumption of materials. He insists the important role the material environment plays in the creation of human identity. As members of a consumer culture, we constantly engage (or get engaged) in the consumption of objects that have the ability to create and/ or transform consumer subject identity. Through the performance of consumption, practice, then, according to Miller lies in the material. This is why he stresses the importance of giving, “acknowledgment to material practice as an expression of agency” (Borgerson 2009). These expressions of the self can come in different ways from decorating ones homes to the way people wear clothes. Like other thinkers, Miller argues that the individual is a product of the social. According to Miller, individuals do not create “order out of nothing” rather are socialized into learning it. The same principal then applies to material culture and material order, where he states: “people are the vehicles by which orders of material culture become transformed. And they in turn re-socialize other individuals” (Borgerson 2009).

Miller also draws heavily on Simmel in his description of the relationship between subjects, objects and desires. Thus, things are of interest to us only if they have exchange value. It is because of this feature that an endless desire to accumulate and possess items is seen in a society. This, according to Miller, happens when distance is created between subjects and objects giving surface for desires to arise. However, a consumer is not born with desires and sets of wishes. Rather, he or she learns consumption behavior over time from both social interaction and cultural symbols presented by marketers and society, and acted upon by people. "It is the production of the unconscious in human cultures, and their bearers, which lies at the root of desires" (Bocock 1993, p.85).

However, desires must not only be taken in the negative. These desires can be desires of love and devotion towards family and friends which, according to Daniel Miller (1998) in his book *Theory of Shopping*, is why people consume and shop for goods. He uses his yearlong study of shoppers in North London to illustrate the social relations shoppers develop through the medium of selecting goods. Shopping, then, is not the end in itself instead is a process, and through this process social relations are formed and identities are discovered. "The significance of a product to consumers depends on which of their identities it enables and the importance of that identity-- what it contributes to their overall sense of self" (Kleine, Kleine&Kernan 1993, p.210).

From the above discussion, it can be deduced that consumption patterns, behaviors and practices are not a simple and straightforward field of study. Nor is it static and universal. Therefore, various approaches will be adopted if we are to understand how consumer behavior in Oslo can be guided into an ecological direction. The question then arises is how can this be done? But before an attempt is made to answer that, we must first understand if consumers are even free to decide their fate? Are consumers

locked-in, in an environmentally unsustainable lifestyle? Is the structure fluid, thus, allowing freedom to the consumer to pick a path of their liking which may or may not be towards sustainability? The next section will attempt to address these questions.

2.3 Consumption as freedom

I am inclined to describe our kind of social condition as "light", or "liquefied" modernity - as distinct from "heavy", and better still "hard" and "solid" modernity of yore: ours is not the "constructed", administered and managed, but a diffuse, all-permeating, all-penetrating, all-saturating kind of modernity (Bauman and Beilharz 2001, p.339).

In the final chapter of *The Bauman Reader* (a discussion between Bauman and Beilharz, February/March 1999), Zygmunt Bauman describes the present day structure of society as “liquid”. Bauman furthers the concepts presented by Marx’s famous quote in the *Communist Manifesto*: “all that is solid melts into air” in his own book *Liquid Modernity* (2000). In the book he describes the shift that society has experienced, from being a “heavy” modern to a “light” modern society. Bauman coins the term “liquid modernity” to explain the present situation of the contemporary world. A world, in which, the reality of life is ever fleeting and fluid. Nothing is permanent in this world. Today’s modernity in Bauman’s view has transformed from post modernity into “liquid modernity”. “What distinguishes liquid modernity from early modernity is the lack of stable institutions. There is no condition; everything is process. With liquid or fluid modernity the relationship between time and space has been altered” (Abrahamson 2004, p.171).

Previously modernity consisted of structures that were solid across time and space. This meant that the old traditions, cultures, values, family duties, customary rights, regimes, got cleared out by modernity. Modernity then replaced them with the dominance of the economic sphere. Given in time, the distinction between classes

and structures melted and liquefied. However, this time no solid structure has been able to re-solidify them again (Bauman 2000). This lack of solidification has given rise to what Bauman calls, a “liquid modernity”. In such a society or rather world system there is fluidity between and within time and space. The focus is on the immediate and now. He describes this society as:

A society of credit cards, not saving books. It is a ‘now’ society. A wanting society, not a waiting society (Bauman 2005, 31).

Individuality and emancipation of the individual is the rule of the day. Individuals are no longer considered as groups or collective units. Rather, they have been liberated through the process of deregulation and privatization of economy. Therefore, there is a divorce of power from politics. This had led to “free agents”, who are capable of and able to make their own decisions in a flexible and structure ‘free’ system.

Furthermore, Bauman emphasizes on the falling out of class distinctions. The class struggle that defined society in the early modern era exists no more. Classes are fluid and liquid too. People are no longer identified based on the class they belong to. Nor are they identified based on the occupation they possess, as was the case in a producers’ society. Individuals or these free agents are now identified as consumers, who live and breathe in a consumer society. He defines the consumer as: “a person who consumes, and to consume means using things up: eating them, wearing them, playing with them and otherwise causing them to satisfy one’s needs or desires” (Bauman 2005, 23). There is no one set of defining class, which is now in control of the means of production. “By extension, no one group can be seen to represent the interests of the 'system as a whole', and 'no group pressure, or a group legitimizing this pressure, is likely to provide a solution to the system's problems” (Beilharz 2001:98).

However, with this force of individualization also comes great uncertainty. It is to this lack of social control which Bauman counts as the greatest problem of the contemporary world. Not only does this “freedom” bring with it a sense of fear, but the individualization also “divides instead of uniting” (Bauman, 2001b: 24). This world system is marked by a separation between power and politics, and social form and individuals. The division between power and politics translates into a lack of consideration of national boundaries. In other words, increase in globalization and liquid boundaries is witnessed. “Power is now free to move rather than grounded in a mutual engagement between 'the supervisors and the supervised, capital and labor, leaders and their followers, armies at war'” (Bauman 2000, p.11).

The division between social forms and people translates into a lack of prescribed identities. According Bauman, individuals in the postmodern or liquid modern developed Western world are now free to be whoever they want to be. “Liquid modernity”, claims to bring with it a freedom from structure. Nevertheless, it has also created new and unexpected challenges for individuals, by depriving them of a solidifying social force and providing a point of reference. Individual pursuit of organizing life independent of the structure, has led to a craze for identity formation. This identity in the “liquid”-capitalistic- world is then reflected through the act of shopping and purchasing goods and life styles. Consumerism- the accumulation of consumer products and pursuit of certain lifestyles- is then the primary means of identity formation and expression (Bauman 2000). Although consumers are free, they must still choose. Therefore, by using Bauman’s theory a deep analysis of the extent to which the modern day Norwegian consumer is free in its consumption decisions can be made.

However, the freedom that accompanies liquid modernity also has its side effects. With freedom of power from politics, society loses its unity. There is no role for

collective social action to take root or movements to take place. This has then undermined the role of the civil society. Taking action against power has become difficult, not only because power itself is fluid and moves quickly now, but because of the individuality of freedom (Bauman 2000). This means that individuals are too caught up in their own freedoms or pursuit of possessions. A lack of ties and detachment from any particular territorial space is witnessed. Such disengagement leaves the individual isolated, and without the existence of any collective order to guide them; they must fend for themselves. Leaving them too preoccupied in dealing with their own trials and tribulations thus, being removed from what Bauman calls the “common cause” (Gane 2001, p.270).

Another effect of this “freedom” can be seen by the convergence between identity and consumption. This is so because society today identifies itself primarily as consumers and not producers. The consumers are told and made to feel that they are free to choose objects from a myriad of options at shopping malls, with supposedly no interference from society or social order. They may dress as they like, eat, sleep and live as they like. Nonetheless, they are still made to pick one identity over the other. Bauman expresses this condition as individuals who are:

Desperately trying to catch this ungraspable, quicksilver pouringness of experience, postmodern individuals believe themselves able to find freedom and fulfillment according to the "agenda" of the open market and abiding by the "codes of choice" with which it seduces its guileless victims” (Inglis 2009).

For Bauman, the very act of consumption is lonely. He argues that by trying to find new identities and re-embedding ourselves into newer structures, we break away from the already existing ones. This, then, leads to an alienation of the individuals. With alienation comes confusion and a constant hunger for more. Desire creeps in and pushes people into consuming more in their search for the self. The question, then,

arises if this freedom is truly emancipating? Or is it binding individuals in the web of consumption even more? Has the process of individualization created indifference? Do we no longer put the interest of the society before ours? Have satisfying individual desires become so important that we have lost any or all regards for the environment? Do we willingly opt for such destructive ways or are we presented with only those options that direct us in this direction? Keeping these questions in mind, this study will use Bauman's theory to also analyze how liquid modernity has shaped consumer identity and behavior patterns in Oslo.

Today's consumer although may have several possibilities, but all those possibilities are centered on the limiting act of the accumulation of products. In other words, "life in liquid modernity is akin to life in a shopping mall: we are now individualized consumers 'free' to "shop around" in the supermarket of identities" (Bauman 2000, p.83). At the same time the individual is constrained by this very demand of picking an identity and lifestyle. Both of which are dictated by media, the market and other forces.

Sanne (2002) talks about the concept of consumer "lock-in" in order to describe this very situation. Sanne sheds light on the dilemma of being a consumer in the contemporary developed world. The concept of lock-in used to describe the limitations that are created by the structure of the society at large. Forces that are out of the reach and control of the individual constrain the choices available to them. Given this situation, the individual must choose whatever options he/she is presented with. Therefore, in this way the individual is locked-in into a situation where he or she inevitably ends up consuming. Lock-in can be described as a state in which the choices of the consumers are limited because of the structural forces that are not in their control. This leads Sanne to question the true nature of the "free agent" post modernity propagates. Sanne's paper explores the difficulties that arise when trying to

control this ever rising scale of consumption, and implementing policies aimed at sustainability. He illustrates through various examples the influence market forces, businesses, the state, and other structural factors play in restraining individuals from making sustainable choices. “Ours is a ‘consumer culture’ where every human wish tends to be transformed into a commercial object or service” (Sanne 2002, p.279). Sanne, therefore, is very critical of the concept of a “free” agent who is capable of making choices independently of external factors. He states that the social order is such that we end up consuming one way or the other. People work hard; earn money so they can spend and they spend, because they earned it in the first place. In order to make up for the time they spent working they reward themselves through spending money and consuming more. Such a structure is “obviously counterproductive to the endeavor of sustainable development” (Sanne 2002, p.280). Therefore, by using Sanne’s concept on consumer lock-in, barriers to sustainable consumption of clothing in Oslo will be studied in further detail.

A review of concepts and theories presented in this chapter is a starting point for understanding the complex nature of consumer behavior. Overconsumption has been marked as one of the leading problems of the developed world. Rising levels of consumption have contributed directly to the ecological challenges faced today. Even over twenty years after the Rio Conference (1992), efforts geared towards a sustainable future have not been as successful as planned. Therefore, a deeper understanding of consumption is needed before action can be taken to shift it in a more ecological direction. As consumer culture is not a “uniform phenomenon, it would be more accurate to talk about it in the plural, as a myriad of consumption cultures. Consumers are not a unified group either” (Svendsen 2006, p.112), which is why the chapter looked at consumption from three different angles. In chapter five a culmination of these concepts will then be used to draw comparisons with the findings of this thesis.

3. Methodology

This chapter presents the method used throughout the course of this study. An overview of the advantages of using qualitative research methodology is provided. It is then preceded by a description of the chosen research subjects and sites. Followed by an explanation of how the data was interpreted and the ethical considerations that were taken up. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a discussion on limitations of the study and employed method.

3.1 Qualitative research

The nature of this study has required a deep understanding of not only *why* people shopped for clothing, but also *how* aware they were of their ecological footprint. Therefore, qualitative research methodology best suited my research. “Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman 2008, p.380).

Qualitative research allows the researcher greater flexibility by exploring subtle topics and issues that are often missed out by other methods. This method is especially helpful when trying to gain a deeper knowledge of the feelings, attitudes, behaviors and opinions of the subjects.

Through qualitative research, an in-depth study of people and social phenomena can be carried out. My method, therefore, has included an ethnographic approach. George E. Marcus states: “Ethnography is predicated upon attention to the everyday and intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups” (Marcus 1995, p.99). Having lived in Oslo since August 2012, conducting my research did not require me to move somewhere new. I conducted 18, in depth, semi- structured interviews and one focus group discussion with seven participants all residing in Oslo. Both the

interviews and focus group allowed me to be in close contact with the informants, giving me the opportunity to take an epistemological approach to the study. In such an approach: “in contrast to the adoption of a natural scientific model in quantitative research, the stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants” (Bryman 2008, p.380).

The in-depth interviews, then, helped me to better understand *why* and *how* the participants shopped for clothing. By allowing them a free space to share, participants provided me with specific reasons for their practices supported by examples. I was also able to identify *what* reasons have stood in the way of sustainable choices. The interviews, although semi-structured, were guided by an interview guide I brought with me to every meeting. For each interview I prepared in advance. I prepared four interview guides for my research. The first guide was used to interview the sixteen consumers. The second guide set the basis for my interviews with the five sustainable fashion designers, the marketing and sales head and the retail store owner. My remaining two interviews consisted of one with the Norwegian author of the book *Klesskoden. Den nakne sannheten om mote* (Dresscode. The naked truth about fashion) and the other with the head of the Textile Panel at the Norwegian Fashion Institute and project manager for NICE (Norwegian Initiative Clean and Ethical Fashion) and editor of www.nicefashion.org. I prepared two separate guides for each of them as well. Although I had a set of questions available to me, as the interview itself was flexible, at times certain questions were not asked. I asked relevant questions on the spot based on where the discussion was heading.

In addition to the interviews, I also conducted a small focus group discussion at a high school in Oslo. The focus group helped me to study consumer perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards sustainable consumption and usage of clothes. The chosen group consisted of seven participants. By using focus groups as a tool, better

discussions are conducted and more candid answers are generated. This way the participants are given the opportunity to answer in greater detail, as opposed to being limited by only a certain number of lines if made to fill out questionnaires. The environment is more relaxed and several new topics can be tapped into, thus, giving a better understanding of the case under discussion. Hence, through the use of focus group discussions the information gathered, “can usefully be plugged into comparative context, in order to infer general pattern” (Moses 2007, p. 131).

Qualitative research also allows researchers to test various theories through the course of their research. I, too, did not enter the field with the aim of testing or proving only one theory rather employed a combination of theories in my attempt at understanding consumption of clothing patterns and practices in Oslo. Therefore, I did extensive research on several theories of consumption. The theories provided in Chapter two were, then, used for both the creation of the interview questions as well as the analysis of the data.

3.2 Selection of subjects and sites

For the purpose of this research I focused on studying mainly Norwegian women living in Oslo. Within the chosen demographic I wanted to keep the sample group diverse. This way the collection of my primary data involved the selection of participants of different age groups with varying academic and civil status.

I initiated my research in September 2013, by going regularly to the city center and observing shoppers. My aim at this stage was to identify which outlets (both location wise and brands) had the most consumer traffic and demographics in terms of gender and age groups. I carried with me a small diary in which I made my notes, listing my informants. In addition to this, I began to read scholarly articles and literature relevant to my topic. During this time I also purchased a hand full of popular Norwegian

fashion magazines (such as, *Henne*, *KK*, *Elle*, and *Costume*). The aim was to identify the types of clothing being advertised in these magazines. My observations later helped in formulating my research questions and subsequent analysis of the collected data.

The literature I studied helped to realize that there was little work on clothing consumption patterns of women in Oslo. This information helped me to identify the sample groups I wanted to study. I decided to divide my sample groups into three categories. These consisted of high school students, university students and housewives. The division was made intentionally with the aim of making co-relations between the frequencies of clothes shopped to the consumer's age once the data was collected. After making note of the most popular places to shop at, based purely on my observations, I decided to approach the shoppers directly. I went from store to store approaching Norwegian women telling them about my study and asking them if they would like to participate. However, no one agreed. After realizing this was not a very successful method, I decided to look for high schools in Oslo. I shortlisted the schools, and emailed the principals. The emails included information about me, my study and requesting for an interview. Once again I was not successful, as none of the emails sent generated any response. It was at this point that I decided to use convenience sampling and approached a contact of mine. As she was a native Norwegian, through her contacts she helped me to get in touch with a high school teacher. I informed the teacher about the details of my study and she arranged a meeting for me. The seven high school students selected had busy schedules so I was not able to have separate interviews with them. Instead I decided to conduct a focus group discussion.

My second sample consisted of university students. I posted a request for informants on the University of Oslo Facebook page, however, did not get any response. I, then,

decided to employ snowball and convenience sampling. Snowball sampling is when through word of mouth one is able to make contacts. Thus, having a snow-ball effect, where as convenience sampling is when the researcher can get informants because they are within his/her access (Bryman 2008, 183). With the help of both of these methods I arranged six in depth interviews with university students. More specifically, five out of the six interviews were conducted through convenience sampling and one through snow ball sampling.

As for the last sample group of housewives, I wanted to interview women of a certain economic background. Vinderen, being one of the richest neighborhoods in Oslo was an appropriate place to find these informants. I decided to approach a local activity club in this location. I personally went to the club and met the manager and informed her of my study by presenting a letter from the University of Oslo confirming my research. In addition to this, a *Participant Information Sheet* was also provided. As the manager wished to remain anonymous I will not be revealing the nature of the club. The manager then circulated my email to all of the members of the club but got only three responses. Interviews with the three women were then arranged through the cooperation and help of the manager.

In addition to studying consumers, I also wanted to learn more about the work Norwegian sustainable fashion designers were doing. A total of five sustainable fashion designers were interviewed; as well as a brand marketing and sales head, an owner of a retail shop, an author of a book and lastly a project manager of a sustainable fashion online organization. In order to find the designers I researched extensively using various sources such as online newspaper articles, fashion blogs, fashion magazines, websites and websites of fashion schools in Oslo. On discovering the faculty list of the *School of Fashion Industry (SOFI)* in Oslo I contacted three faculty members via email. The emails consisted of background information about

me, the topic, my aims and objectives. Out of the three emails sent, I got one reply. Mari Grinde Arntzen lecturer at *SOFI* and author of the book *Klesskoden. Den nakne sannheten om mote (Dresscode. The naked truth about fashion)*, agreed to meet with me. Through her help I was able to arrange an interview with a Norwegian sustainable fashion designer, Leila Hafzi.

During this time, I also came across the website of *NICE-(Norwegian Initiative Clean and Ethical Fashion)*. I emailed Tone Skårdal Tobiasson, head of the Textile panel, requesting for an interview to which she agreed. Furthermore, I joined the *NICE Fashion* group on Facebook. I posted on the group page about my study and sent an open interview request to any designers who were members of the group. The post generated a response from the owner of a sustainable fashion retail store, *Velbevere*, who invited me to a pre-Christmas event at her store. It was there that I was arranged to meet a sustainable fashion designer and creator of the brand *M.A Garderobe*. She told me about other designers in the same field, informing me about the store *Designerkollektivet*, where a group of 26 independent fashion designers show case and sell their work. The event helped me socialize and make contacts. Interview dates were set with both, the designer and the owner of the store. I proceeded to contact the designers at *Designerkollektivet*, through their Facebook page. I received a reply from one ethical fashion label, *Håvarstein couture*, and arranged to meet with its designer.

In addition to this, I had also generated a list of six other Norwegian sustainable fashion designers. I emailed all of them and received three replies. The contacts were from the creator of *Re-think Designs* and two from the Sales and Marketing head of the brand *Nina Skarra* and the designer Nina Skarra. Once again interview dates were set. The sites for the interviews varied and were decided based on the convenience of the participant. Therefore, interviews were conducted at the high school campus, the

university campus, the participants' homes, student housing villages, coffee shops, a hotel room, a retail store and lastly one interview via Skype.

3.3 Collection of data

A total of 25 participants were involved in this study. Seven of which took part in a focus group discussion, while the remaining 18 were interviewed face to face. The interviews were conducted over a period of three months between the end of September till the middle of December 2013. All of the interviews took place in Oslo. All the informants were both Norwegian and women, with exception to the male sales and marketing head. Both the focus group and interviews lasted between 45 minutes to two hours.

The 18 interviews and one focus group were semi structured and in depth. For every interview and focus group, I prepared in advance and took the interview guide with me. The interview guide had specific questions related to the themes I wished to address. However, impromptu questions were also formulated and asked when the need arose. Before the interviews the rights of the informants were read out. They were made aware of the option to remain anonymous. They were asked for their permission to be recorded. All, except one participant, allowed the interview to be audio recorded on a digital recorder.

All of the interviews were carried out in English. The interview guide was used to help steer the discussion in the right way. Although the structure of the interview was open, the topic at hand was consistently addressed. The informants were, however, allowed and encouraged to discuss topics they felt were more important to them. Honest and candid answers were encouraged. The questions used were open-ended and not suggestive. I also carried a notebook with me to the interviews, in order to mark down any notable observations. There was no bias when entering the interview

and focus groups. Therefore, objectivity was maintained throughout the entire data collection process. The informants were given the freedom to express their opinions and openly discuss their clothing consumption habits.

3.4 Interpretation of data

Once the data had been collected, all of the interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed in full. Themes were then generated based on the answers. I listened to the interviews a couple of times before I started to analyze the data. As I listened again I took down separate notes. These notes were used to compare with the observations I had made earlier during the interviews.

Listening to the interviews a number of times helped me to better identify themes I wished to discuss in this thesis. I cross checked the information in the transcriptions with the recordings to make sure nothing had been missed out or miss written. Once I had ensured the data was accurate I started to generate themes. I then compared the answers of each of the three sample groups with each other and within the group as well. For each sample group I had separate notebooks with the themes identified. Answers were then noted under relevant themes. After which comparisons were made in both theme and group context. By maintaining separate notebooks for each group, making comparisons was made easier. Although a time consuming and lengthy task, it helped me in gaining clarity with the analysis. Lastly, graphical representation of the collected data was made possible through the use of pie charts. A pie chart is a circular chart divided into sub-sections. Each section represents a separate numerical value. The values are a percentage out of the total responses for each of the specific themes. Therefore, by using pie charts I was able to give my findings both a numeric value and a graphical illustration.

3.5 Ethical considerations

As my research involved gathering and using information provided by private individuals, I informed them of my intent before I attempted to take on an interview. They were made fully aware of the reasons behind why the interview was being conducted, what will be done, and how the information will be used once the interview was finished. I also informed them that they could ask me for a copy of the final thesis. I did not wish to mislead any of the informants in any way therefore, getting their consent to conduct the interview was of prime importance. The option to remain anonymous was communicated to the informants before the interview session commenced. Anonymity was maintained unless otherwise stated.

In addition to this the following were communicated to them:

- Right to decline participation
 - Right to withdraw from the study at any time
 - Right to have privacy and confidentiality will be assured
 - Right to have audio or video devices turned off at any time
 - Right to ask questions about the study at any time, and
 - Right to receive information about the research results and conclusions
- (Scheyvens and Storey 2003, p.143).

3.6 Discussion of limitations

Perhaps the biggest limitation of qualitative research is its specificity in participant criteria. The information gathered is unique and specific to the context of the participants only. This suggests that generalizing the findings across a broader population might be difficult. Furthermore, qualitative research is often criticized for having a researcher's bias. Hence, only the topics that are of interest to the researcher

are pursued and investigated. However, a generalization to a broader population can be made because the participant criteria chosen for this study are most representative of the Norwegian consumers. Specifically, young and wealthy women are not only targeted by most brands but are also the biggest consumers. Thus, the three groups studied (high school students, university students and wealthy housewives) are most suitable for broad representation. Another limitation of qualitative research lies in the limited quantity of participants. Once again difficulties may arise when generalizing the data. However, the limited number of participants in this study allowed for an in-depth analysis of the data collected, thus, leading to a fuller understanding of consumer choices.

As previously mentioned, some of the specific constraints faced during the course of the research included finding informants. Trying to find Norwegians willing to participate proved to be more difficult than I had expected, particularly when I emailed various schools in Oslo. In the end I had to rely on my own contacts. Another limitation and observation I made was during the focus group discussion. During the first few set of questions only one girl seemed to be open about her response. The other six only nodded or would say “the same as her”. It was only after I realized this pattern that I asked them to feel relaxed and confident. I even told them the importance of getting honest answers for my research. Furthermore, I assured them that their names would not be mentioned. Once they were comfortable, a better and honest discussion was made possible.

Lastly, due to the limited amount of time to conduct my field research, I was unable to get more information regarding other stakeholders’ perspectives on the topic. Had time permitted, I would have approached representatives from civil society and governmental organizations as well. The opinion of stakeholders on the barriers to the success of sustainable consumption of clothing can be possible future work in this

field. In spite of all the hurdles that were faced, I believe the study produced thought-provoking results.

4. Presentation of results

In this chapter I will present the results of my field work conducted in Oslo. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first part looks at factors that help determine consumption patterns of clothing amongst the 16 women selected for the study (seven high school girls, six university students and three housewives). The second part studies their awareness level regarding the impact their consumption patterns have on the environment. The third part identifies barriers to sustainable choices from a consumer's perspective. Lastly, the fourth part presents the responses of the five sustainable fashion designers and other stakeholders to the consumer identified barriers.

4.1 General clothing shopping practices

A number of factors were identified by the informants as shapers of their consumption habits. I will first present an overview of the general buying patterns of the consumers. General shopping patterns were deduced by studying the frequency of trips made to stores and the most popular clothing brands identified by the respondents. An overall look at the data shows that on average the majority of the women interviewed shop on a bi-monthly basis. From Figure 2 (page 44), it can be seen that fifty percent (8 out of 16) of the sample group shop every two months. Five women purchase clothes every month, one on a weekly basis, while the remaining two others shop when a new season is approaching by visiting stores on a quarterly basis.



Figure 2: Frequency of consumer shopping patterns

By studying the composition of responses within each group of consumers, a deeper analysis of the data was also made possible. The results showed, from amongst the group of high school students, five shop every two months, whereas two said they shop every month. The ones who shop every two months also revealed they might end up shopping a little more than that when looking for “basic items like t-shirts or a top”(age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo). On the other hand, responses from the group of university students reveal a more even distribution of data. Two out of six (university students) shop for clothing on bi-monthly basis, two on a monthly basis and one shops on a quarterly basis. From amongst the three housewives that were interviewed, each had a different shopping routine. One shops every month, one every second month and one on a quarterly basis. However, the two who shop on a bi-monthly and seasonal basis, make three to four visits to the shopping areas within the stated months. Therefore, although it may seem they purchase clothes over extended periods, but within that period the frequency of their visits increases. This is in

contrast to the one off trips made by a majority of university students over a period of two months.



Figure 3: Stores most visited

When asked which stores the respondents shop at, more than seventy percent listed mainstream fast fashion brands like Zara, H&M, BikBok, Lindex, Vero Moda, Gina Tricot (Figure 3). Only twenty three percent said they shop at small local boutiques. This twenty three percent consisted of the three housewives that were interviewed. One housewife, age 40, said: “I do not like to shop at INEXPENSIVE big stores. I only go to small boutiques in Vinderen where I live.”

A similar pattern was seen with regard to the question about location. Figure 4 (page 46) projects responses of consumers to the question: “Where in the city do you like to shop?” A majority of the university students and high school students prefer to go to the city center and walk from National Theatret to Jernbanetorget, covering the shops

that come in the way. Malls, although popular amongst both groups, are usually the first choice for most 17-18 year olds, as opposed to the university students.

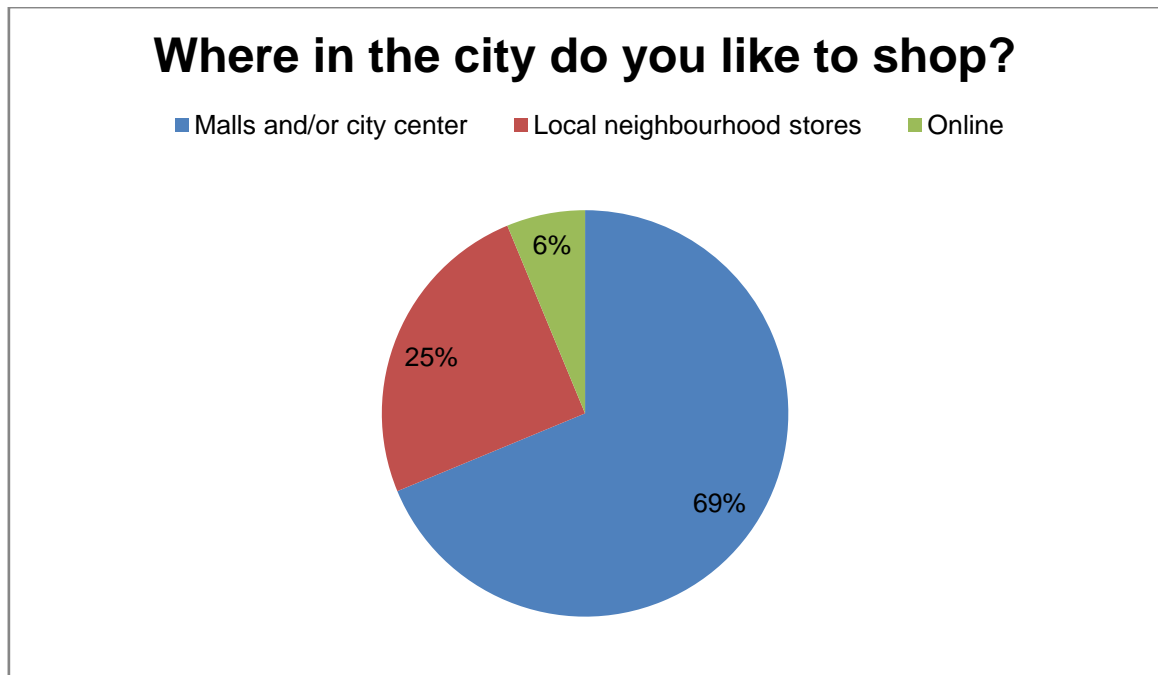


Figure 4: Most visited location in the city

On the other hand, twenty five percent of the respondents prefer to shop in their local neighborhood stores. This consists of the group of housewives between the ages of 40-60. “I do not go to downtown, it is very seldom. I stick to the boutiques in my neighborhood (...) it is convenient and less crowded” (housewife, age 50, Vinderen).

4.2 Factors shaping clothing consumption choices

This section will now reveal the reasons *why* consumers shop for clothing. Specific factors will then be highlighted and explained with the use of pie charts as well.

4.2.1 Price

One of the objectives of this study was to understand *why* consumers shop for clothes as frequently as they do. Figure 5, shows respondents' answers to the question: "How important is the price of clothes?" My findings revealed that for more than sixty percent of the respondents' price is very important. This consists of a majority of high school students and few university students. All of the high school students explained when shopping for clothes price usually comes first. This is due to the fact that they mainly rely on their pocket money to shop. It was further explained that due to the affordable prices of the mainstream brands (fast fashion), they even prefer to buy cheap. However, for certain items like jeans, if the quality is good, they willingly pay more.

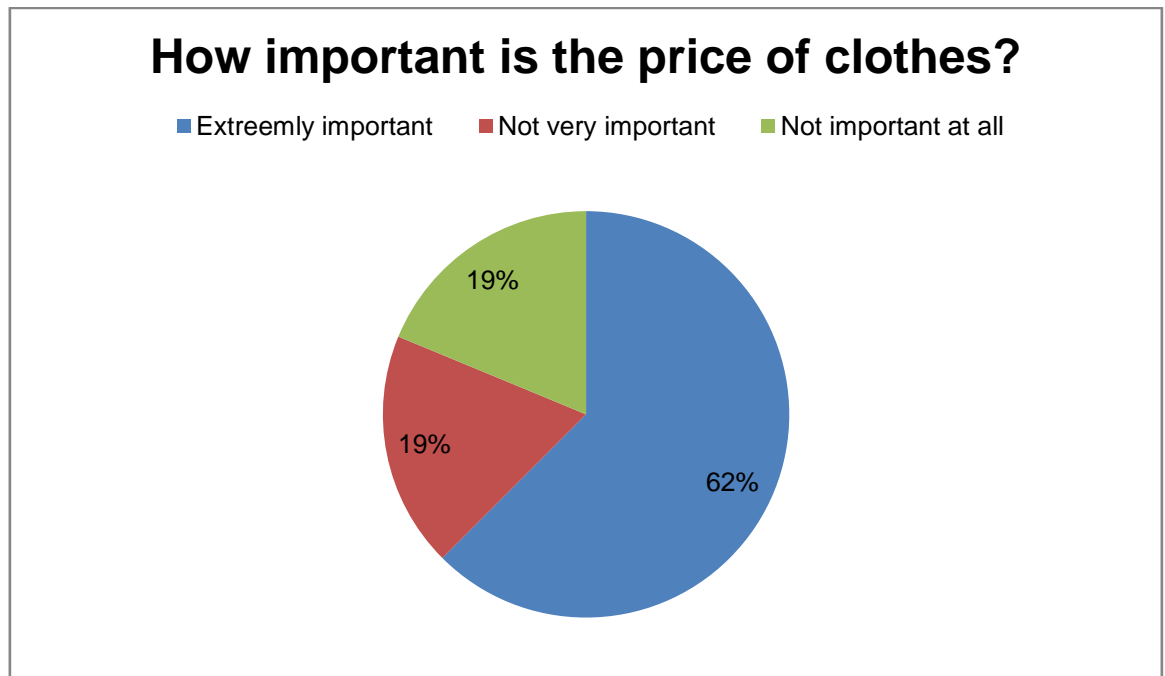


Figure 5: Importance of price

On the other hand, the few who stated price was "not very important" consist of only university students. Similarly, for whom price is not the determining factor at all

consist only of the group of well-to-do housewives. In almost all the responses, price was quoted as important. However, when compared with the quality of the product, thirty eight percent said quality was more important than price. Figure 6, shows the responses of the sixteen women interviewed to the question: “When shopping for clothes what comes first, price or quality?”



Figure 6: Price versus quality

During the focus group discussion with the high school students, those who chose price over quality also revealed that at times they might go for quality as well. A distinction was made between good quality and trendy items. The high school students informed me that depending on the item, price played a role. Therefore, if the clothing item was cheap, trendy, but medium quality, they would buy it. One student explained: “If something is fashionable and will go out of style, I like to buy cheaper” (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo). When comparing the two groups, it can be seen that the ones who find price more important are dominated by 17-18 year old teenagers. The ones who feel quality beats price consist of an older age group consisting of a few

university students and all of the housewives. Teenagers and university students' alike shop frequently, and prefer to purchase in large quantities at the inexpensive larger brands. Yet, if they wish to purchase an item they want to last longer, they all agreed they are willing to pay extra. One student (age 18) said: "Depends on the item I'm buying, if its boots that I want to last longer, then yes I buy from good places" (Elvebakken VGS, Oslo).

On the other hand, the group of housewives preferred to buy expensive and good quality clothing. For them, the quantity of clothes did not matter as much as the quality. They even mentioned how price was considered as a secondary factor when buying clothes. When asked the question: "When buying clothes what do you think makes the most difference to you and what comes first?" One housewife (age 40, Vinderen) said: "For me it is the design and quality. If the design and quality are good, then, I am willing to pay a price for it." Another housewife (age 50, Vinderen) had similar views when she said: "I think it is a combination of design and quality, but if the quality is good then unfortunately the price is also high. But I like to have less, good quality clothes that can last for years."

Hence, differences in preferences can be related to the age group one belongs to. This also explains the income level the respondents fit in. Unlike the well-to-do housewives for whom durability of the clothing matters more, for high school and a few university students purchasing cheap clothes is an important factor. As most of the students do not have a running income they are not able to purchase highly priced clothes. However, it is important to note that it is the quantity of clothes purchased that pushes them into buying "cheap". The desire to purchase clothing in large quantities will be explored further in Chapter five.

4.2.2 Leisure

Sometimes we don't have anything to do so we go to the mall. Have dinner after shopping. Or combine both. It is a nice way to spend time with friends (age 23, Nurse student, Oslo).

Eleven out of the sixteen respondents described shopping for clothes as a form of entertainment. An activity they did when they were free or had nothing else to do. Going to clothing stores as a form of leisure was a common feature amongst most responses. Combining that with a trip to the coffee shop or dinner with friends was how most respondents described their trips to the mall. Shopping proved to be a popular activity amongst all of the women. At times they planned in advance to shop, while sometimes they did it spontaneously. When asked: "Do you shop alone or with somebody?" a Law student (age 20) replied: "I shop with my friends and we start at National Theatret and go till Stortinget. Then afterwards we will go to a coffee and sandwich place usually BITS." Even out of the four respondents for whom purchasing clothes was not a hobby or a form of entertainment, one did admit it was a nice way to spend time with friends or family. One housewife (age 50) described how she enjoyed shopping with her daughter in the following way:

When my daughter is free and visiting I like to go shop with her as well. Then she tells me "oh this is nice, buy it". It's also a nice way to spend time with my daughter. I even like to shop with my friends, like when we went on a sports tour recently we advised one another on what and what not to buy. It's a lot fun.

Another informant mentioned going to shops as: "entertainment, just to look at stuff. But not a hobby! It can be a way of how to use your time and nothing more" (housewife, age 40 Vinderen). The informants also emphasized on achieving a sense of happiness and content after purchasing new clothes. "I feel content when I find something that I will use. I feel relaxed, because I know I have it for this season and then I don't have to shop anymore. I hate to buy things I will not use, so I like to buy

something I will use. But I also enjoy to shop with my friends or if I'm abroad on holiday" (house wife, age 60, Vinderen). One university student (age 23, Nurse student) describes how shopping also acts as a mood changer for her. "I feel good; I love to buy new stuff. It's a good feeling to have something new. If I get a bad grade I will go buy a new sweater to feel good. Or if I did well in school I like to get myself a present."

One high school student (age 18) remarked how she felt like a "shopaholic". "Sometimes, I get very happy and excited after I buy something". Another student responded by saying the following: "I also look forward to wearing it (the clothing item), like this winter jacket I bought I was hoping for it to be cold so I could wear it" (age 17, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo). Another girl (age 18) from the same high school stated: "What you wear changes how you feel!" From amongst this group, five also mentioned a feeling of guilt because of spending too much money. Yet, were quick to cover up by saying they knew they needed those clothes so it was justified. One student remarked: "I don't feel guilty after I buy a lot of clothes, because I can always think of a reason why I needed those clothes" (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo).

The overall responses of the respondents reflected a feeling of joy and happiness being derived from purchasing clothes. Albeit this feeling of joy they experienced lasted for a short time and was described as "temporary". One informant explains how she feels after buying a dress as: "if it's a nice dress and it fits well and suits me then yes, I'm very happy, but it's not for a long time" (housewife, age 50, Vinderen). The role that the fleeting nature of the pleasure that is derived from the leisurely activity of purchasing clothes will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

4.2.3 Identity

Thirteen out of the sixteen women that were interviewed explained their clothes were an expression of who they were. One university student (Chinese Studies student, age 23) explained how she was instantly drawn to a t-shirt she saw walking past a store:

My Levis t-shirt is the one thing I cannot get rid of. I'm very attached to it. I got it when I was fifteen. I walked past it so many times and I was like that is me and I should have it. Even though it was expensive it just spoke to me.

Another informant (Library and Information Science student, age 24) described how standing out was very important, and also the reason why she preferred to sew her own clothes. She mentioned that she did not like to own clothes that others already had or purchased clothing just because they were branded. She explained: "Buying label and branded clothes is more of a personality eraser and I cannot do that." When I asked her if it was important for her to dress in a certain way, she responded in the affirmative by saying: "It is very important for me to stand out. I really do not want to be another brick in the wall."

Most informants explained how certain clothes are mirror images of their personalities. Hence, even if they do not go to the store with the aim of shopping they do end up purchasing if the item catches their eye. One law student (age 20) revealed the importance of dressing in the following way: "It is very important to be dressed properly. I want people's first reaction of me to be positive. How I am dressed, stand, and speak, all add up to reflect me and these things matter." When asked: "Would you say your clothes wear you or you wear your clothes?" She explained:

There are certain things I wear a lot that the general public doesn't wear as much and I wear them because that represents me. For example, hats a lot, and leg warmers a lot and people don't wear them as much. A lot of people comment that it's "weird". I also wear colorful socks a lot with big patterns, but then again it's hidden and subtle and only I know it but I also am aware of the fact that I am wearing them. It represents me.

She further elaborated by narrating a shopping experience: "recently I was at a leather store, and I really wanted to buy a leather jacket, but I ended up buying a lot of other things like dresses. I tried on a lot of jackets but none of them were me. So instead of buying a jacket I splurged and spent money on buying a lot of other things." From amongst the group of high school students, six out seven girls also explained the importance of dressing in a particular manner. They reflected on how the way one dresses says a lot about the person's identity. When asked: "Is it important for you to be dressed in a certain manner?" one girl (age 17, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo) explained, "I feel elegant and better when I put on nice clothing instead of sloppy clothes".

Another student added to this by saying: "I do not want to wear sloppy clothes around others, I think it is a little about what others think" (18 year old, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo). The same point was further explained by another student when she said: "At school I wear jeans (...) I do not feel comfortable wearing tracks at school, I feel it looks like you are tired or don't care about school" (18 year old, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo).

Making an impression on others, and a fear of getting judged by projecting the wrong kind of image was a widely held belief and practice. This feeling was equally shared by the group of housewives I interviewed. One informant (age 40, Vinderen) explained:

I don't go out of the house in my jogging pants. It's usually for training or cleaning the house. I don't even go to ICA in these pants. Because to me it doesn't look good on other people so why should I wear that and meet people like that outside the house. I mean if I see people in airports in jogging pants I think it looks awful.

Another informant (housewife, age 60, Vinderen) shared the same view by stating: "I don't like to go out in my yoga suit. But if I shop for daily food after sport then I will be in my sportswear but I keep my training shoes ON. So that people will know I have come from training and I have been playing tennis. But at home I like wearing slippers because I think it's better for my feet. Otherwise I dress more formal, but if I am expecting someone I put on my shoes. We are more like old ladies and I think we were brought up that way."

The use of clothes as a tool to express one's personality and identity proved to be a popular way of explaining *why* consumers purchase clothing. Chapter five will, then, be discussing in greater detail the practice of using clothes as identity markers and the impact this has on consumer choices.

4.2.4 Fashion

Following trends and keeping up with what's "in" and new this season was a popular topic of interest amongst the informants. Particularly so for the group of high school students I spoke to. Eleven out of sixteen women expressed their interest in being fashionable and following trends. When asked: "When buying clothes what do you think makes the most difference to you?" Six out of the seven high school girls mentioned following trends as an influencing factor. Four out of six university students and one out of the three housewives held the same view.

One high school student (age 18) explained that being in style was very important to her, even if the clothing was not very comfortable. She said: "If it is a pair of jeans I

will wear every day, then yes, comfort is very important. But if it is something like a nice dress then no, it is not important” (Elvebakken VGS, Oslo). Six out of seven high school students agreed on this point as well. Another student (age 20, law student) explained how she enjoys going online to see the latest trends, and what is in stores before she makes a purchase. “I go online and surf to see what’s in. I never buy online but I do a lot of window shopping online. It is nice to get an idea of what I can purchase.”

One student mentioned it was almost impossible to escape from following fashion and new trends. During the interview she said: “To some extent I follow trends, very simple, not too many colors. But I get influenced to some extent. It is hard to avoid. Sometimes there is something new, and at first I will not like it and think it is awful. But then I start to like to it.” When I asked the following question: “Is it because you see it around on others and it sort of grows on you?” She said: “Yes, it does!” (age 23, Chinese Studies student). When asked if the group of housewives followed trends, the immediate response from two was in the negative. However, interestingly the desire to keep up with what was new was still prominent amongst them. Even if they said they did not follow fashion. One of housewives said:

I like to wear nice clothes, but I’m very traditional and I don’t follow trends, though of course I see what’s happening. But I do not regularly keep a look out at for example what is long or short now. But for me it’s more like what is nice for me. So new trends and fashion may be very nice, but it might not suit me and then that is a waste of money. For example, with heels again I think it looks so elegant on women when they wear them, but I am so tall I don’t think I look good in too high heels. So I think it is very important that you feel comfortable in what you are wearing and you look nice in and it suits you otherwise its point less (housewife, age 50, Vinderen).

A similar point was elaborated by another respondent who mentioned that although she did follow fashion, wearing comfortable clothes was more important. “I think I

follow fashion more, but comfort always comes first. If I'm not comfortable wearing something and it is not me, I will not wear it. So I like to buy clothes in which I am comfortable and show my personality. But I'm not that into fashion that I will sacrifice my comfort just to look good for example, if a pair of heels is too high and I can't walk in them I will never buy them" (housewife, age 40, Vinderen).

Knowing what the trends are was common to women across age groups. However, differences existed when the question of actively following those trends arose. The group of housewives hesitated more about blindly following the latest fashion and trends. For them, feeling comfortable in their clothes was more important when deciding what to purchase. The younger age groups of high and university students however, admitted to keeping their wardrobes up to do date as often as they could. The role that trendy and fashionable clothes and brands have played in determining unsustainable consumption habits are, therefore, illustrated in detail in the upcoming chapter on discussion of results.

4.2.5 Store location and layout

Location of the stores was another commonly quoted factor when describing what the respondents considered when shopping for clothes. Five out of sixteen mentioned the word, "convenient" to emphasize on the importance of location. From amongst the group of housewives all agreed to shop in places that were located close by. They informed me how the proximity of the store to their homes played a major role, especially when they were running short of time and had to make a quick purchase of a clothing item. When asked: "Where in the city do you like to shop?" One housewife (age 40, Vinderen) said: "Definitely my local neighborhood. Convenience is a very important factor." A university student (age 24) also admitted by saying: "I am not that picky but I like to shop anywhere closest so it is usually at Ullevål Stadion." One law student (age 20) explained as her classes were held at the main University of Oslo

campus at National Theatret, shopping after class was a common practice for her. She said: “I used to live outside of the city before joining the University so I shopped at Sandvika. But after I moved to Oslo, it is the Karl Johan, National Theatre area. It is central and easy access to food and drinks.” She further explained: “I have classes at National Theatret, and so after class I just go to the shops to look around and shop so it is very close”.

Six out of the seven high school students also mentioned the importance of the location of the stores. However, for them convenience did not take shape in terms of stores located close to their homes, rather it meant having all the brands in the same area. As a first option they preferred to shop at the mall. They explained that having all the stores under one roof was convenient for them, because then they could go from one store to the next easily. Furthermore, the food court played an important role as it provided a social space for the young adults to socialize and interact with one another. Eating, relaxing and socializing with friends after a day of shopping was a common practice amongst them. One high school student explained (age 18 Elvebakken VGS, Oslo): “I like to shop at the mall as all the stores are there in one place. Also the food court is there.”

Another university student (age 23) also held the same opinion: “I like to shop at the mall, because then I have everything around and I can see the stores. Otherwise, I shop in the city center because all the shops are located together so I don’t really have to go too far to get to another one.” A similar point was raised by another informant who mentioned she avoided going to the city because of this reason. “Every time you go into the city for something else you end up into a clothing store because they are everywhere and closely located. It’s an impulse as well as I told you I was in town on Saturday for something else but then I decided to walk around and see the shops instead” (housewife, age 50, Vinderen).

In addition to this, fourteen out of the sixteen informants mentioned the role of the layout of the store. They all admitted to have picked up socks, jewelry or nail polishes while waiting in line by the cash counter. Last minute shop drops-in their carts was common amongst the majority of the respondents. When asked: “When you go to shop for say a pair of jeans is that the only thing you come out with?” A 24 year old university student said: “The arrangement of the store does impact me because I do buy socks near the cashier when waiting to pay. I look and say ‘oh this is so cheap’ so I will buy it”. Another informant mentioned (23 year old, Chinese Studies university student): “When I go to shop I normally buy what I want to buy, but occasionally it does happen spontaneously I buy something more. It is the set up of the store and you are standing in line and you see the offers and so pick up the items.” One high school girl (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo) stated: “When I buy a pair of jeans it is always easy to shop for other things as well.” Another girl (age 17) from the same high school said: “I try not to look at other things I get distracted easily.” One of the university students interviewed responded to the question by saying (Age 20, Law student):

Last minute I buy socks all the time. The atmosphere is good and music is good and I am not bored, so I stay longer as well. In Norway, they (sales persons) don’t really ask you if you need any help they just smile, and if you have a question you go to them, but they don’t come to you. But when I was on holiday in Canada the sales people would come to me and say is everything ok do you need a different size. And they are so eager and shows you things and then you are like oh ill buy it. They are so friendly and eager to sell that you don’t even want to disappoint them.

From amongst the housewives interviewed, the role of the sales staff also played a vital role in their purchasing practices. They each mentioned how it was of prime importance that they had a relationship with the sales staff. For them, if the sales staff knew about their likes and dislikes helped a great deal when they shopped for clothes.

They mentioned how the staff would even suggest and help them pick out items to wear. One of the informants (age 60, house wife) explained:

I like to shop in Vindernen and there is a shop which has been there for well ten years now and they pick clothes from different brands in one shop and sell them there. The woman knows me and she helps as well and knows what I like. Also she shows me what is new so I don't feel lost and I like the personal relation and attention I get. It makes a difference when you have a personal relation with the sales people there. The personal attention you get is very important. Also they know what I like so they suggest things to me.

Therefore, close proximity of the stores to the informants' homes and also to other stores, food courts, internal atmosphere of the store and a friendly and attentive staff played an important role in determining their purchases. A factor discussed further in chapter five.

4.2.6 Necessity

Six out of the sixteen interviewed explicitly mentioned they bought clothes only out of necessity. The others said they do not shop merely when they needed something, but did emphasize necessity was one of the reasons why they do shop. When asked if they considered shopping for clothes to be a "hobby or a necessity?" six replied necessity. However, when describing the number of times they visited stores only two respondents' trips were limited to the coming of the new season. Although the four did say they only shopped when they needed to, the frequency of their trips reflected otherwise. On the hand, when trying to define what constitutes as a "need" varies from individual to individual. For example, one informant mentioned how she only bought new clothes if her old ones were worn out or when a new season was approaching. One university student (age 25, Green Party member) mentioned: "I only shop a few times a year so it is usually seasonal. Like when winter is approaching I will check the websites for the new collection and make my purchase."

When asked: “When you go to shop for say a pair of jeans is that the only thing you come out with?” her response was: “I only shop when my clothes get worn out so I usually buy more than one item online. And I go through the web page to see what is available and then order.”

Another informant explained how although she goes to the store only when a new season comes she makes frequent visits during this time. As she liked to have clothes on her, and not when she needed them otherwise she would be rushed into shopping. She explained:

I like to go and see what I can find because I always have what I actually need, so I am not really going shopping that often. I like to go and see what is in store and what they have this season (...)Then I like to buy several things that fit together. I like to do it that way. Then I can easily come home with a lot of things. Then I am also very dependent on the person who is selling to me. To combine different clothes together and they also know what I bought last time. And I like to buy it when I don't need it because then I don't have to rush to a store when I might need it. (Age 60, housewife, Vinderen, Oslo)

Thus, suggesting that whilst the need to purchase new clothing for one may arise only when the clothes have actually worn out, for another it may come up every time a new season's collection is launched. Therefore, reflecting the relative meaning that need or necessity itself holds for people. Further reflections on purchasing clothing not out of necessity alone will be made in chapter five.

4.3 Knowledge/awareness of ecological footprint

The second objective of this study was to find out *how* aware consumers were of the impact their consumption, and usage patterns of clothing have on the environment. Therefore, the second half of the interview questions revolved around the theme of sustainability. Each respondent was asked a series of questions that would allow me to

understand how much knowledge they had regarding the matter? Secondly, to identify how much consideration they gave to issues regarding sustainability during their purchase and usage?

4.3.1 Knowledge of sustainable fashion

Figure 7 (page 62), shows the responses to the question, “What comes to your mind when hearing the term “Sustainable Fashion?” Eight out of the sixteen (50%) responded by saying: “Fair working conditions for the workers are provided.” One high school student (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo) said: “Workers work under reasonable conditions”. Another informant (age 40), described her impressions of what sustainable fashion was, as:

I think, the people that make them (the clothes), get the money that they should for making those clothes. Then also the entire process from where they pick the cotton and make the cotton and clothing and everything is done correctly. Recently I was in the U.S and in the Target stores they give money from the sale of clothes to the poor countries. They also have posters that show the entire process of where it comes from so maybe that’s why I know a little bit after reading that. Then there are no children working at the factories. There is no child labor. (Housewife, Vinderen)

Nineteen percent of informants responded by saying: “low ecological impact” by using eco-friendly production techniques. One law student (age 20) said: “I guess the production of clothes is more sustainable and less wasteful, I am assuming. I do not know a lot about it.” Another respondent (age 24, Library and Information Science university student) explained:

That the production is friendly to the environment and production of material is again friendlier to the environment and less damaging. The raw materials used have fewer chemicals in it.

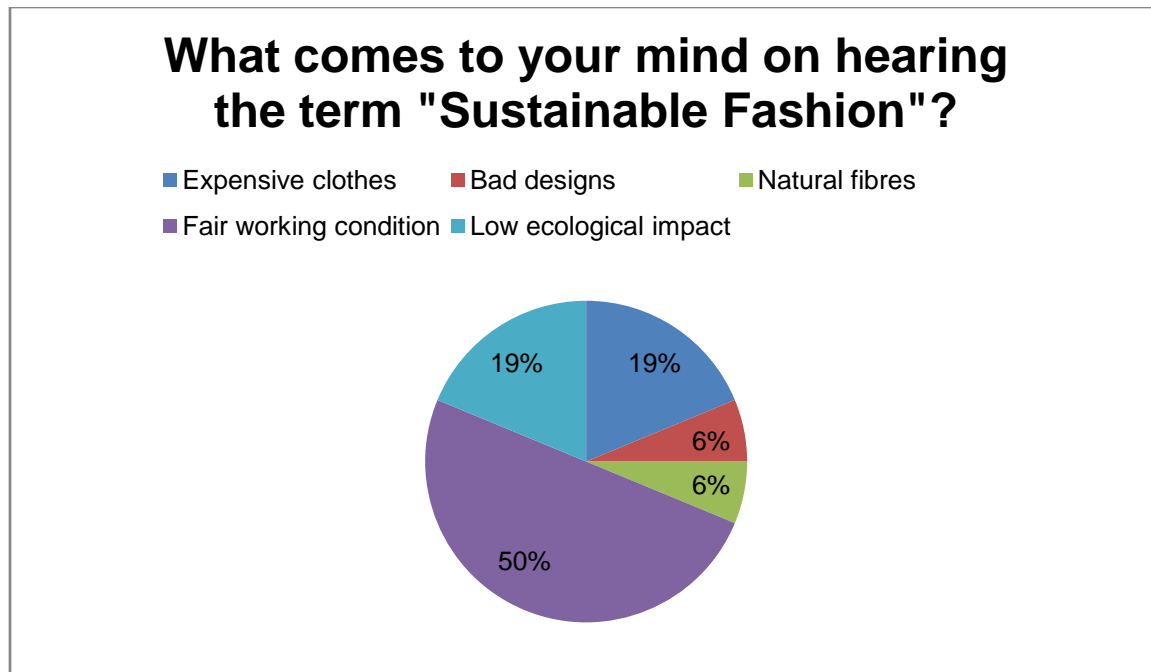


Figure 7: Knowledge of sustainable fashion

Another nineteen percent's initial and immediate response was "expensive" or "pricey clothes". One high school student (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo) in response to the question said: "I think of price, expensive clothes!" Similarly one university student expressed her views as: "First thing I think of is overpriced. That it is expensive". Six percent (one out of sixteen) responded by saying the clothes were made from natural fibres. Twenty five year old university student shared her ideas about sustainable fashion as: "Clothes that have been produced with natural materials and the fibres that have been used have undergone the least amount of chemical treatment." One respondent reacted by saying: "Weird design and too special. Have some weird cuts and prints that I do not like."

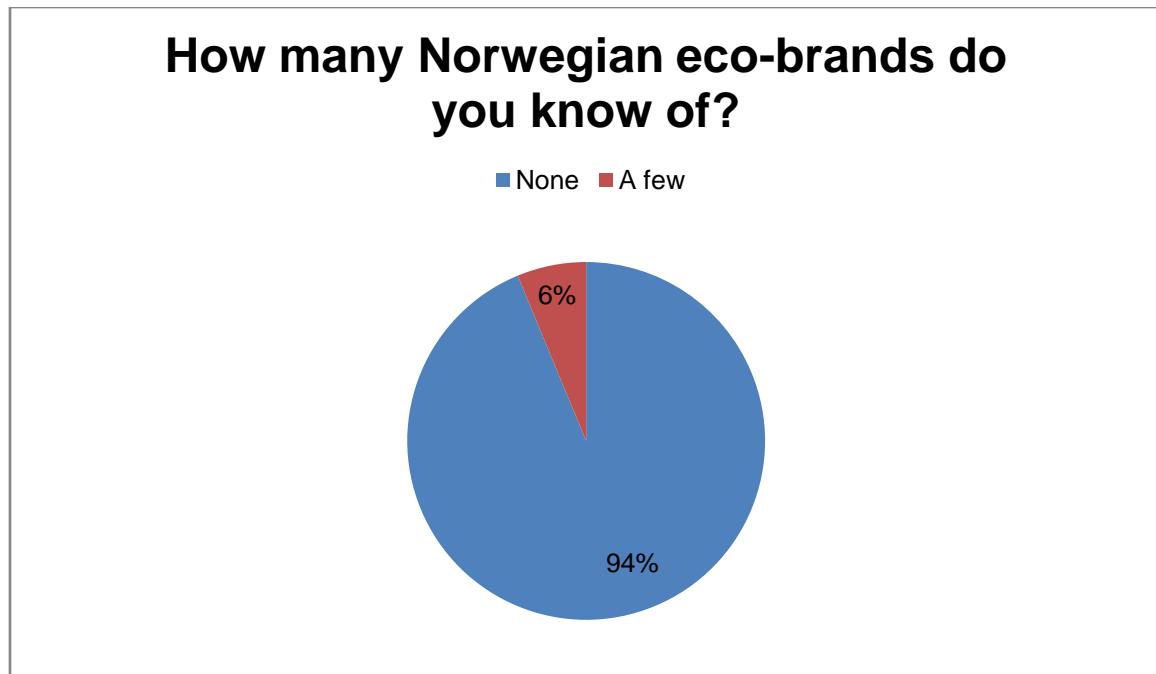


Figure 8: Knowledge of Norwegian eco brands

After gathering responses to the ideas the informants had of the meaning of sustainable fashion, they were asked if they had heard of any brands that produce such clothing (particularly of Norwegian brands). Figure 8, reveals that fifteen out of the sixteen respondents had never heard of Norwegian ecological or ethical brands or of any other eco brand. Only one respondent said she knew of one Norwegian eco brand “FIN”. On asking the seven high school students: “How many Norwegian eco brands do you know of?” They all replied; “NONE”. When the same question was presented to the university students and housewives I got a similar response. One student (age 23, Nurse university student) said: “None. No I do not know of any eco brands”. Another respondent (age 24, Library and Information Science university student) said: “Not any and I do not think I have purchased from them either.”

When asked: “How often do you look at the label of the clothes to see where it is made and/or what goes into its making?” Ten out of sixteen said that they do look at the labels but only to check for wool. From the seven high school students, six said

they check to see what the fabric is but never where it is made. One respondent (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo) said: “I check to see if it is 100 percent wool or polyester.” Another (age 17, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo) said: “I check very often especially with nicer clothes”. One other student (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo) from the same high school added to this by saying: “I check to see if I need to iron it (clothing item) in order to get instructions.” From amongst the university students, three out of the six said they check the tags to see what the fabric is made from. They, like the high school students, had a similar response to the question. One law student (age 20) said: “I do not look at where it comes from. But for sweaters I look at what it is made off, especially in winter because I am looking for wool in my clothes.” Another student (age 23, Chinese Studies university student) had a similar response when she said: “No I do not look. I check to see for wool but otherwise never.” One respondent (age 40, housewife, Vinderen) responded to the same question by saying: “Not very often. But I usually think they (the clothes) are made in China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, because nothing is made in Europe. But I don’t look to see where it (the clothes) is made, I should but I don’t. I check (the tag) to see what it is made of, if its cotton or synthetic for quality. But you never see anything that is made in Norway.” Another respondent (housewife, age 50, Vinderen) had a similar view when she explained herself by saying the following:

Not very often. If I like it doesn’t matter where it is made, but I do check for quality. Like what fabric is it? If I want cashmere sweater I will check if it is 100 percent cashmere or mixed with angora. So I want the pure one. Quality labeling is important. So I also ask what it is made off so that I have the pure quality.

The majority of the respondents did check the labels on the clothes, but their answers revealed that it was only to see for the fabric. Tags on sweaters were checked, especially to determine if the material was pure wool. When asked: “To what extent do you trust the information on the labels?” all of the sixteen informants said that they

did without question. A law student (age 20) said: “I trust is completely. I have never doubted it, never considered doubting it.” Another informant (age 24, university student) said: “Well I do not really look at labels, but I think the information they give is correct.” The respondents explained the reason for their trust was based on the strict regulations and legislations of the Norwegian labeling system. In lieu of this one informant said: “In Norway you can trust (the label) but in other countries you can’t because we went on a sports trip to Turkey and there you couldn’t trust anything about what was on the brand. Also if a brand is selling in Norway you can trust that the information given will be true. But in other places you can tell its fake, they say it’s silk but its nylon” (housewife, age 40, Vinderen). Another university student expressed her view by emphasizing on the importance of trusting the information provided on the clothing labels. She said:

Well, you have to trust the information. Already I feel I need to look into everything and am in this investigative mode trying to find where a particular item comes from. So if the information is not accurate, I would feel trapped which is why I do trust it. In Norway at least I do.”
(25 year old, university student and member of Green Party,Oslo)

All of the informants had complete trust in the information that was given on tags of the clothes. One informant even said: “Norway is very strict and has a lot of rules so I would like to believe that they are strict about the accuracy of labeling as well” (house wife, age 50, Vinderen). They all believed that in Norway the governing rules are very stringent when it comes to the environment and so the accuracy of the information provided on labels is not a matter of debate. Thus, showing the extent to which informants are dependent on the state for the information that is passed down to them. This point will be further elaborated in the upcoming chapters.

4.3.2 Washing habits

From Figure 9, it can be seen that 94 percent of the informants wash their clothes on a weekly basis. Fifteen out of the sixteen interviewed informed me that they washed their clothes regularly and after every wash. When asked: “How often do you wash your clothes?” All, with the exception of one, said they washed their clothes on a weekly basis. All washes were done by using electronic machines in the informant’s houses. One high school student (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo) explained how in her house clothes were washed every day. “Every day continuously clothes are washed by machine. With three loads one of whites, colored and black.”



Figure 9: Washing practices

Another informant (age 40, Vinderen) mentioned: “I wash clothes very often after one wear. I machine wash them, never use dry cleaning, it is not convenient. Small wool silk item, I wash by hand. Sweaters I wash after 4 uses maybe.”

Washing clothes on a regular basis and mixing different fabrics such as cottons, polyester, wool, silk all together in the same wash was a commonly noted practice. Using a dryer to dry clothes however, was used less often by all the informants. In chapter five, the uniformity found in the washing patterns of informants will be addressed further by making links to concepts on social practice theory (presented in chapter two). Furthermore, the influence these habits have had in the perpetuation of unsustainable practices will also be discussed in detail.

4.3.3 Disposal practices

When asked what the informants did with their old clothes, two kinds of responses were generated. The gathered data was then divided into the following two categories; give away clothes and throw away clothes.

Fourteen out of the sixteen who said they give away their old clothes also threw them away. Depending on the condition of the clothing item, a particular disposal method was employed. This was explained in detail by one informant as stated below:

I try to give it away to sisters, family or the Salvation Army (*Fretex*). But if it is torn or not useable, I throw it away and sometimes clothes that I am bored of and don't use I give them away too (housewife, age 40, Vinderen).

A university student (age 24, Library and Information Science student), had a similar response when she said:

I give them to charity. If they are really damaged then I TOSS them away. I have used *Fretex* boxes several times.

Similarly, one university student (age 23) had the following to say: "Sometimes I give to my little sister or *Fretex* or some other charity. If they are torn, then I just throw them away." Another student (age 25) said: "I normally give away to organizations such as *UFF* also because I know they are socially very active and so I trust them

more.” All of the sixteen informants interviewed reflected similar patterns of disposal behavior. They used the drop boxes to give away clothes in charity and also at times to family members. If, however, the clothes were torn they would throw them in the trash. One of the respondents however, admitted never to have used the *Fretex* or any drop box system. She said (age 20, law student): “I haven’t done this yet, but I am in the process of it and so I plan on giving it to *Fretex*. There are two drop boxes near my home.”

Although most of the informants do give their clothes in for charity, they also quite easily send their clothes to the rubbish bins as well. A small torn or hole in a shirt automatically qualifies the clothes for the litter bin. Many informants used terms like “get rid of”, “toss” away or “throw away” when referring to the act of disposing off their clothes. Showing signs of no remorse when carrying out this process.

Furthermore, hints of a culture of wasteful living are reflected through the disposal habits of the informants. In Norway, households account as the biggest source of textile waste. Although, consumers in Oslo give out clothing in charity, the majority of the clothes disposed off still end up in landfills. Clothing makes up a majority of the textile waste found in Norway (SSB 2001). An analysis of the extent to which consumers are aware of their share in this waste culture will be discussed further by employing Bauman’s theory on the consequences of a “liquid modern” world in chapter five.

4.4 Barriers to sustainable choices

Another objective of this study was to identify *what* factors stand in the way of the success of sustainable clothing consumption patterns in Oslo. In order to identify these barriers, the second half of the interview questions revolved around the theme of sustainable fashion. The findings showed that consumers were not able to consume

and use clothing sustainably owing mainly to two key factors: lack of information and price. Henceforth, this section will present the details surrounding the identified obstacles.

4.4.1 Lack of Information

Lack of information was quoted as the biggest barrier by all of the sixteen informants. When asked: “Do you feel you are informed when it comes to sustainability issues regarding clothes?” One of the informants had the following to say: “No, I feel more information needs to be provided. You can see where it (the clothes) comes from but you don’t know how it (clothes) was made. A lot more information about stamps of approval also needs to be given” (age 25, university student). Another student shared the same view when she said: “I know, for example, how fur can be made in a bad way but that is not what I think about when I am actually buying the clothes. When I am at H&M I do not think of the people who make it” (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo). Similarly another informant said: “I honestly do not think about the workers. I have heard over the years that the workers are paid really poorly and the conditions are really bad. But it is not something I think about when shopping” (age 24, Library and Information Science university student).

Having little knowledge about how and where clothes come from seemed to be prominent across age groups and income brackets. One of the informants even felt a little frustrated when asked about her views on the matter. She said that she did not know what information to even look for. She said: “I do not even know what to be informed about. I know very little about HOW something is made” (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo). Not only did the informants feel less informed but they also thought that it was the responsibility of the designers or brands to inform them. One informant said: “Brands do not put out information so you do not know which clothes are made from what” (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo). On the other hand the

problem with dispensing too much information was also brought into focus. One law student (age 20) said: “There is lack of information, but then again there can be too much information too. But then I would get sick of it and annoyed and not care. A balance needs to be maintained.” When the same question was put forward to the groups of housewives, one informant (age 40) gave suggestions on how information about sustainable clothing could be made available to the public. She said:

Yes a lot more information needs to be provided. People are not that aware. Also big stores should have a section that is separate for clothes that are environmentally friendly (...) so it is easy to find them. And we can see what is good and bad choice. Even I need more information and big stores if they wanted to they can give that information. Also I think if more information is given in the news people will go and ask for it and then even the producers will know that people are demanding that. If the quality is good too more people will buy and you will have a better conscious after buying it. The stores can give you that information but they don't give it.

When asked: “Do you feel more needs to be done in order to inform the public?” all of the sixteen informants responded in the affirmative, and also suggested ways in how this could be done. One university student (age 25, Green Party member) said: “Yes absolutely. People on average do not know much about this issue. They only know what is fed to them via the popular media. And we do not talk about these issues at all.” Another student (age 23) suggested that websites were the best way to give out information about sustainable production of clothing. She said: “Maybe we should have more information. Lately, a lot has been shown about child labor and workers so that is good. Companies should also have websites that show us where our clothes come from.” Informants also reflected on the importance of having knowledge of national certifications that assured the clothing was ecologically and ethically sustainable. One high school student (age 18, Elvebakken VGS) voiced her view on the matter by saying the following: “There should be a national stamp or certificate that shows that the clothes are sustainable and we should be informed about that.”

In addition, another university student (age 24, Library and Information Science university student) suggested that consumers should research themselves as well. She believed it was also important to gain knowledge about the consequences of the way consumption was carried out. She said that people should: “Read more information about the consequences. More information needs to be given out as well. Nowadays it is so easy to buy, that’s why we look for convenience and also it is so cheap to buy.” One fashion blogger (age 24) expressed her views on the positive impact information sharing could have by stating: “I think the more information I get, the more I will follow. I think people need to be made aware and for things to change drastically.”

The informants felt that the areas where they needed most information were regarding how their clothes were made. They were aware when it came to the social and ethical problems of production of clothes. However, they lacked much knowledge when it came to identifying what sustainable clothing or sustainable fashion was. Furthermore, the informants were also naïve as to the ecological impact of their clothing washing and disposal practices. Lastly, there was a growing concern over not knowing what to buy, where to buy from and what certifications to follow. The concluding chapter will, therefore, be discussing ways to address the above mentioned factors.

4.4.2 Price

Another commonly quoted problem that informants had with sustainable fashion (ecologically friendly and ethically sound clothing lines) was their price. Most of them thought that sustainable clothing was very expensive and discouraged them from purchasing it. One informant said (age 23, Nurse student): “They (sustainable clothes) are expensive and there is lack of information, people do not think about it on a daily basis.” Another high school student said she would only purchase if the price of the

sustainable clothes was similar to that of other brands. When asked: “If designers were to inform the public about eco lines do you think you will buy from them?” She replied: “I will look at the price as well. If the price is the same then I will buy the eco friendly product.” (age 18, ElvebakkenVGS,Oslo)

In addition to price, a few of the respondents stated that they did not like the design of sustainable clothes. “Bad design” was quoted as a major reason for not purchasing such clothing. When asked: “Do you think fashion and sustainability can go together?” One informant said: “Maybe there is room for sustainability in fashion. But if they (sustainable clothes) are too expensive not many people can afford it. But if they (sustainable fashion designers) lower the prices, maybe make the design more mainstream more people will buy.” Another student (age 20) said: “If they (sustainable fashion designers) want to sell it (sustainable clothes), they should appeal to people through good designs. With second hand clothes it’s difficult to change the design. But even with eco lines the designs are not very appealing or I don’t know which brands are offering eco lines.” Moreover, one informant expressed problems with the quality of sustainable clothing as well. Being well acquainted with the field of interior design herself, she had ample experience with fabrics and dyes. She explained how the switch to the use of natural dyes had led to the production of lower quality fabrics. She said:

With my (work from home) business in interior design-the quality of many fabrics is not very strong like it used to be. Since you can’t use chemicals to keep the colors nice therefore, when you sell something the fabric is not going to last 20 years but 10 years now. I mean, even if you buy green clothes, the problem now is that they will not use chemicals for coloring and so the color fades away faster and you need to replace it more often. So the quality is not very good (...) the best is if they (sustainable fashion designers) manage to make the quality good and also “green”. I don’t know when or if they (sustainable fashion designers) can but maybe they can find a way (house wife, age 50, Vinderen).

On the other hand, one informant stated that the consumers too had an important role to play. She said that if consumers demanded and asked for better quality and designs, the sustainable designers would produce accordingly. The informant believed that consumers were not helpless and that it was important that they (consumers) actively sought this. She said: “I think if customers ask for more green design and better designs they (sustainable fashion designers) will make it. It is up to us really. They will make good designs that are also green. Producers will make it for us!” (housewife, age 40, Vinderen).

Lack of information, high prices, bad designs and poor quality were identified as some of the factors that stood in the way of sustainable consumer choices. Although the identified barriers had hindered sustainable choices in the past, almost all of the informants were willing to alter that. When I asked them if designers came up with more sustainable lines, and brands informed the public that the clothes were ethical and ecological in their production, would they purchase from them. All of the respondents said they would willingly switch. A few of the informant’s responded to this question in the following ways:

If a brand says they are sustainable then I will be inclined to buying from them (age 18, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo).

Another high school student said:

It (eco-clothing) sounds impressive so the quality will also be better as well. (age 17, Elvebakken VGS, Oslo)

Twenty three years old university student had the following to say:

If a brand supports eco and sustainable practices I will be willing to pay even more. But it is important for me to know because I do not know much.

One university student (age 20, Law student) eagerly responded to the question in the following way:

Definitely! I feel I would be more inclined to buy from someone that are doing things properly but I wouldn't go as far as doing research before buying so unless they inform me I wouldn't care(...) They should inform the public more. I also like the concept of re-using things, being green is in!

The aforementioned question generated a lot of enthusiastic and optimistic responses from the consumers. Even though the informants had little knowledge about ethical and ecologically produced clothing, an interest in purchasing them still seemed to be present across all age groups. Further analysis on how to usefully address high prices of clothing will be presented in chapter five.

4.5 Designers' response

This part of the thesis will present the responses (to the consumer identified barriers) of five Norwegian sustainable fashion designers, a Sales and Marketing head and the owner of one sustainable fashion retail store. They were asked how they marketed and advertised their products. I also inquired about the challenges the designers faced while operating in the highly competitive world of fashion. Furthermore, questions were also raised on why there was lack of information sharing regarding sustainable clothes and its consumption.

Torstein Skarra, the Sales and Marketing head of the high end sustainable brand *Nina Skarra*, explained their process of marketing their line in the following way:

Instead of putting 200,000 NOK in advertising in (Norwegian) fashion magazines we put it in five fantastic dresses, travel to LA and put the dress on an actress to be worn at a red carpet event. We want to build our brand through the story the press tells and the story is about what we do.

I: How can marketing/advertising and sustainability be used together?

TS: We use sustainability as a positive message. For us it is a part of our brand values and we use it every time we can. But we know that consumers are more interested in how the garments look, feel and the price than sustainability. So when we market we say how fabulous the garments are. It is not a market advantage being sustainable, but it is something we build our brand around.

Similar views were shared by the creator of the shabby chic eco label- *Re-think designs*, Veronika Glitsch, when she explained:

I am not a seller, but I will not point out the bad things of the way the big producers make clothes. I do not think that is the way to sell. The best thing is that the product has to be so good that people buy it. Even if they do not know it is sustainable and then when they buy it is an extra plus that is also sustainable (...) I do not use sustainability as a selling point. Of course if people ask then I tell them.

When the same question was presented to the creator of the ethical and eco label *Leila Hafzi*, she said: “I do not always use organic or ecological positioning as a selling point. I tell stories instead (...) get sufficient information, invest in it and do your research so you have enough knowledge to tell the story.” Creator of the independent re-design label, *M.A Garderobe*, also said how using sustainability as a marketing tool was not actively practiced by her label. However, if her customers asked, she would inform them about the fabrics being used and how the product was made. She said: “Today what matters to the customers are the look and the design. If it is sustainable then it is a bonus and gives them (consumers) a good feeling”. Furthermore, almost all of the designers mentioned having limited budgets. They explained, as their overall budgets were tight, spending a lot on advertising campaigns by using popular media was almost impossible. Creator of the prêt a porter eco designer label, *Håvarstein couture*, explained:

I do not have a big capacity, if I have an order I produce. I use Facebook and my website for marketing. When you do one to one pieces, marketing is difficult, but if it is a line of products then I need to spread it on a bigger scale. For small designers to have an advertisement in a big fashion magazine is very expensive. So it is not worth it and has very little impact.

Most of the designers revealed that due to limited budgets they could only use social media to market themselves. Creator of the eco-label *M.A. Garderobe* explained: “We do not have much budget, so we have our label and flyers. We go to trade fairs, use Facebook. If we have special collections, like when we had one on knitted wear we have fashion shows in hand craft shops in Oslo. We then get press coverage of the event.” Being a small independent designer engaged in the production of sustainable clothing was described as very challenging. Not only were their budgets limited, but their target market was also very small. Even if the designers wished to inform the public more on the ecological and ethical aspects of their lines, limitations in budgets meant limitations in marketing and advertising. The owner of the sustainable retail store *Vel Bevare*, had a similar issue to discuss:

When you are a small company like us we do not have money to do big campaigns.

I asked: How do you currently market yourself?

VB: Since our budget is very limited, we use social media. Then we do a lot of in-store marketing. We inform our customers and have weekly campaigns and market in the locality. But we really want to get more media attention. We also use fashion bloggers to get the word out.

I: Then how can we inform the public?

VB: Media too has to be interested in this topic for it to become popular.

High prices had been stated as the second biggest problem with sustainable clothing lines by the 16 consumers that were interviewed for this study. When I approached the designers with this problem, a number of factors were brought to light. The

designers explained that the higher price was due to the small volumes they produced. Furthermore, most of the production is carried out by hand. This means that the designers sew the clothes themselves in most cases. If they have their products made in factories, their volume is still small compared to other bigger companies. Therefore, often at times, their production is not given priority. This, then, causes delays in the delivery of the final product which further adds to their cost. In the end, the final prices end up being higher than the mainstream fast fashion brands.

Another factor that feeds into this is their smaller market shares. Independent designers in Norway have a small market base in comparison to the bigger brands. When the market is small, the demand for their product is also limited. Large scale production, therefore, is not an option. With a limited number of items the revenue earned is not enough to cover the costs of production. This causes the prices for sustainable clothing to further inflate. The creator of the re-design eco label, *M.A. Garderobe*, explained:

We do everything ourselves with all of the production based in Scandinavia. We search for fabrics and it takes a lot of time. We wash it, take it apart; then we make it together again. When we sell we do not even get paid for half of the hour of work. When you do re-design in Europe, the assembly line itself costs more than in China or Bangladesh (...) People do not see the time put into it and the hand work that goes into the making of sustainable clothes.

The creator of the independent eco label, *Håvarstein couture*, when was asked: “People often complain that the prices of eco lines are very high. How would you address their concern?” She explained the reason for this by saying that: “Tailoring is no longer done on a large scale so it is more expensive today.” When asked: “What is the biggest challenge you face in this line of work?” To this she also said: “For me the challenge has always been the income versus time. The hours you spent you cannot get paid for (...) now when I launch this assembly produced (new) line (of clothes), if

the demand will go up it will be a way of making money. Then I can do even more handcraft if I can make money (...) People do not understand the value of pure fabrics. H&M will never have the capacity to do that with each product because they have so many products.”

Re-think Design's creator Veronika Glitsch argued, when setting prices a number of factors need to be kept in mind. As their lines are not produced on a large scale, the production not only takes time but also costs more. When fixing the price based on the hours of labor, the total amounts to a figure that will not be acceptable by the final consumer. Therefore, the price is actually understated given the hours of manual labor that go into it. The cost of producing sustainable clothing, therefore, is still more than that of the factory made mass produced lines. She said:

It is not possible to make sustainable fashion as cheap as the mass producers. The prices have to be higher but it is important to show that the clothes will last longer and are of good quality(...) it takes 25-30 hours to do one dress but I never make enough money to cover that. I do not do my marketing and production somewhere else, so it is very difficult to make money (...) I do one of a kind dresses and not mass production.

I: What is the biggest challenge for you?

Re-think Design: It is very difficult to make a living out of it in Norway. It is not possible for one person to sow and earn money. If I charge 650 NOK per hour for a dress and I work 20-25 hours. If I set the price based on that, no one will ever buy my clothes. Especially because I want to make clothes for every day wear and people are not willing to pay 20,000 NOK for that.

When I asked: “How can the issue of higher prices be addressed?” Leila Hafzi had the following to say: “if demand goes up, production will increase and prices will go down. Suddenly unsustainable will be expensive and its demand will be low. We are

expensive because the demand is not high enough and the quality is really good (...)when I create something it is timeless and not trend based”.

When discussing the challenges of higher prices with Nina Skarra, she said:

The biggest problem is the way we shop. People do not want to spend money on good quality clothing, because for such a long time we have been spoiled by cheap clothing. Everyone now can afford fashion. However, it is creating a huge problem that we did not see coming.

Furthermore, from amongst the five sustainable designers that were interviewed, two of them were high end brands. As they catered to a niche market their prices were set higher than the others. Torstein Skara (Sales and Marketing head of the brand *Nina Skarra*) explained the reason for this:

Nina wanted to build a trend which was part of the trend setting movement. This meant she had to go to luxury. Instead of going to the volume brands she went luxury. Volume brands always play the price game and they say sustainability is not good for business, yet! (...) Most of our fabrics are produced in Europe. Here the standards are high for both the workers and the environment. So by using European fabrics she (Nina Skarra) has to pay more but she knows that there is a certain standard (...)It is impossible to change the future if you go bankrupt. Being economical is also important for us. Above a certain standard, price wins.

I: Why aren't the prices quoted on the website?

TS: It is difficult to put a price on the website because the stores have the possibility of changing the price a little bit. Some stores pay more rents while others pay less.”

I: How do you see your brand evolving in the future?

Torstein Skarra: Nina now wants to build lines that have the same values but are a little less priced so more people can be reached(...)this way she will reach more people and bring change because it cannot be done by just focusing on the most exclusive. This could not have been done before because she has the brand position now. Now the brand is strong and everyone knows it and we can create diffusion lines for more people.

Another problem highlighted by consumers was the lack of availability of ecologically and ethically produced clothing lines. When browsing for stores locations of sustainable fashion designers, I discovered that the websites of these designers do not state the location of their stores. When I asked how people could purchase their products, they said consumers personally contacted them by using the emails provided on their websites. The reason for not stating the outlet's location was a strategic choice. Therefore, as Torstein Skarra explained, not stating the location of stores was a means of protecting their markets. He said: "we do not tell where we sell and that is a conscious choice. Our stores would like us to, but if we have a list out of where we sell then other brands wanting to compete with us will sell their garments in those stores and push us out. So it is to avoid strategic movements from other brands." Due to the nature of the fashion and apparel industry, the competition is intense and not on a level playing field. The market is run and dominated by the bigger fast fashion brands. Smaller independent designers on the other hand, have to struggle fiercely in order to create and maintain a market for themselves.

The upcoming chapter will, then, be discussing the aforementioned factors that have shaped unsustainable consumption practices and address the barriers that have hindered the success of sustainable consumption and usage of clothing.

5. Discussion of Results

The thesis so far has presented reasons *why* consumers shop for clothing, *how* much they are aware of their ecological footprint and *what* barriers stand in the way of sustainable consumer practices. This chapter will now compare these findings with the literature previously presented in chapter two. The aim of this chapter is to get a deeper understanding of the intricacies that create, shape and surround the world of the consumer.

5.1 Consumption as a sign

Thirteen out of the sixteen participants in the sample group said they used clothes as a way of reflecting and projecting their identity. Only six participants explicitly said that they bought clothes out of necessity. The term, “it’s not me” was often used to describe the items they did not purchase. Items of clothing have been, and continue to be used by individuals as tools for expressing their identity. This identity can range from dressing in an “acceptable” or “presentable” manner to wearing “alternative” clothing. In this way giving strength to Woodward’s (2007) views on clothing as being important markers of identity in the lives of people.

Using clothes as a means of communication was also a common way of explaining why informants picked out certain clothing items over others. Consumers also used clothes as a way of communicating. By this definition, clothing is no longer just a piece of fabric needed to cover a body, but it holds symbolic meaning. The clothing is a sign which stands for something, in particular the individual’s identity, which is used to communicate with other individuals in the context of the society at large. Thus, it forms a triangular relationship between each of these signs. The data I collected to a great extent reflect and validate Pierce’s theory of the triadic circulation

of semiosis. In this process of communicating the very act of consumption is then given a whole new meaning.

Using clothes as a means to communicate is not limited to consumers alone. All of the sustainable fashion designers interviewed for this study described the importance of “telling the story”. This story they referred to, was about the story of the dresses. Nina Skarra, for example, tells the story of Scandinavia. When she launched one of her collections called “ICE”, she used elements from Scandinavian winters in her story telling. Similarly, Leila Hafzi, on her website uploads short movie clips with the release of each new collection. Every collection has a different theme and description. The clips are used to narrate stories of Nepal depicting its beauty, people and nature. She uses the same approach in the picture catalogues she gives to her customers with every dress that is sold. The eighteen page catalogue is used to reflect the scenic and serene beauty of Nepal. A model is seen dressed in a simple yet classic dress, usually standing in the midst of the misty Himalayan Mountains or walking through the lush green farms of the country. Elements from nature are fused in with the clothes the model is adorned in. The focus, therefore, is not just on the product but rather on the story of the evolution of the dress. The dress is not separated from nature, but is shown to have come from it. A feeling of being one with nature is experienced through the subliminal messages being communicated through these pictures. This is in stark contrast to the way most Norwegian fashion magazines advertise (such as *Henne*, *KK*, *Costume*, *MASIV*), where the model is either standing in an empty room or the back ground is often blurred out. The focus is limited to the product itself. Page after page one is almost bombarded with pictures of products and suggestions of achieving bliss only through the possession of these products is fairly prominent. Once again, the combining of different signs to communicate (either messages of sustainability or mass consumption) in a given context is seen, in this way supporting Pierce’s theory further.

Consumption, as Baudrillard also argues, is about consuming what the item stands for. It was very important for all of the chosen participants to be dressed in a certain manner. Almost all of them described how they did not like to be dressed in “tracks” when in public. This response was similar across all age groups. For example, from amongst the seven high school students interviewed all of them did not like to be dressed in a “sloppy” way. According to them dressing up this way reflected signs of carelessness, a message they did not wish to give out. How they dressed was based on how they saw themselves and wished to be seen by others (Baudrillard 1998). A similar case was seen in the data collected from amongst the group of university students and housewives. I asked one participant (age 23, Chinese Studies student) about how she felt about going to vintage stores for purchasing clothes. She declared that only a certain group of people went there. Thus, if she or anyone else went there, they would automatically be associated with that group. She said: “It is popular amongst some groups, like all the hipster go there (...) So it discourages other people because they do not want to be associated with a group label”. Through her insight, Saussure’s reflection on the arbitrary nature of signs is also highlighted. By choosing not to purchase at vintage stores, the consumers selects one type of clothing (sign) over the other based on the knowledge he/she acquired through decoding codes that have been structured and formulated for them since birth. Once they acquire this knowledge they are in effect adapting to the values that reflect an “indigenous world view” (Mick 1986, p.198). In other words, those who do not purchase at vintage stores do not associate themselves with the meaning that vintage clothing holds. Their identity was different from that, and so they chose clothes that projected who they were. In the process of choosing not to shop at vintage stores, differences between different types of individuals and groups are reflected. Furthermore, Baudrillard’s and Woodward’s theory on consumption is also corroborated in this example. Baudrillard states that all consumption in essence is a consumption of signs and

symbols. When and what we consume is based on how we see ourselves and want to be seen by others.

My data revealed that the consumption of clothes had very little to do with the direct satisfaction of basic human needs. From amongst the reasons that were quoted, “boredom” was a popular one. Most of the informants, in addition to using clothes as identity projectors, would also shop out of boredom. When they had nothing to do they would go and shop. Baudrillard describes this kind of consumption as “idealistic”, where it is no longer about satisfying a need. Thus, consumption is about consuming signs and ideas. It is this idea that the fast fashion brands sell to the consumers. The idea is that they must have this season’s new jacket, dress or shirt. This idea creates and fuels desires amongst consumers. Amongst the informants, there was a conviction that every two months a visit to the nearest H&M or Zara outlet needs to be made. According to Daniel Miller (2009), problems of consumerism stem from this very desire of constantly wanting to stay up to date with every season’s new trend. He states that when distance is created between the subject and the object, desire creeps in. When linking this concept with the data I collected, we can see that more than 60 percent of the informants shopped not out of necessity but out of desire. They described a feeling of “happiness” and “content” every time they got something new to wear. One high school student even described herself as a “shopaholic”, because she felt every time something new was brought into the market she had to have it. Therefore, when the object of desire is away from us in the shelves of the store, the individual seeks to reduce the distance by purchasing the desired item.

Even if the clothes never actually get to be worn, the desire of possessing them pushes consumers to swell their wardrobes limitlessly. One informant (age 23) even mentioned how owning expensive clothes made her feel special. When explaining why possessing expensive clothes mattered she said: “Maybe because of the status

that comes with having branded and expensive things makes me feel good.” On the other hand, the group of housewives interviewed did not blatantly display the desire to own expensive items. Yet, when describing the types of clothing they kept for special occasions, Chanel suits were mentioned as timeless pieces of clothing they used quite often. Therefore, reflecting hints of Veblen’s theory on conspicuous consumption.

From the above discussion it can be inferred that the act of consuming clothes is no longer about the satisfaction of a basic human need, but rather is a symbolic satisfaction of the ever growing desire to accumulate and possess items of clothing. Symbolism is also heavily used by fast fashion brands in their advertisements to promote a lifestyle of affluence, opulence and grandeur. This further pushes the consumer to cross the thresholds of basic needs and enter into the realms of endless desires, which feeds into the perpetuation of mass and unsustainable consumption patterns.

5.2 Consumption as a practice

During the interviews, almost all of the participants described shopping for clothes as a way of socializing with family and friends. Going to the mall or the city center for shopping was often followed by a trip to the coffee shop or restaurant. Purchasing clothes was described as a form of entertainment or a leisure activity. Most of the informants associated shopping with socializing with friends and relaxing. Some informants even called it a “hobby” or a way of spending free time. For them, consumption could be described more of a social activity. The information collected during my interviews showed that the informants’ act of combining socializing (with friends/family) and consumption was done unconsciously. They described the process as a routine or a normal activity, something they did without giving much thought to. Thus, this shopping ideal supports Reckwitz’s (2002) theory of social practice.

Reckwitz theory on the individual being a carrier of several different practices can be supported by the data collected. Not only did the informants have similar shopping habits but also similar washing, drying and disposal habits of their clothes. Almost all of the participants washed their clothes after wearing them once and on a weekly basis. Similarly, they threw away their clothes if they were torn; none of them said they mended it. Clothes were also thrown away if the informants no longer liked them or were “bored” of them (showing no signs of guilt, when doing so). They also said they gave their old clothes to charity only if it was not torn. The uniformity in the way the informants carried out these daily tasks, reflects both Bourdieu and Reckwitz’s view on the individual being socialized into practices. These characteristics are not of the individual’s but of the practice they have been conditioned into learning over time and through repetition therefore, forming habits or what Bourdieu refers to as *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990). Thus, also suggesting that with changing times practices and habits may also change.

My data showed that shopping for clothes as a hobby was more prominent amongst the younger age groups than the older ones. One of the informants (age 60) said that for youngsters’ shopping has become a hobby, by giving the example of her granddaughter, but not for people of her generation. In my interview with Mari Grinde Arntzen (author of the book *Kleskoden-Den nakne sannheten om mote*), she revealed how purchasing clothes while she was growing up was very different from the social activity it has now become. She said:

When I was a little child we had to go 20 km just to buy clothes, in the nearest town. It was just 3 shops and not for children, but now in the same town you have this big shopping center in the middle of the town. And in this center we have maybe 5 fast fashion stores. So you see these are two different worlds in a way now.

Furthermore, the data collected also reveals the influence the structure of society at large has on the individual's practices. For example, when the informants were asked about their knowledge regarding sustainable consumption, almost all of the informants placed the responsibility of informing them onto the producers. The participants described how it was not possible for them to know about which clothing was ethical or ecological unless they were not told. Therefore, showing the dependence the individual (agent) has on the structure (society) and in turn the influence structure (society) has on the individuals' (agent) actions. The influence the structure has on individual action can further be seen in the responses when eleven out sixteen informants said that they consciously followed trends and fashion. Even the ones who did not follow every new trend liked to know what was in style that season. One informant (age 18, Elvebakken VGS) said how it was difficult to even consume less because of the way society has been shaped. She explained having a large variety and quantity of clothes was the norm. She also reflected on trying to consume less clothing and expressed her views as: "it is difficult because of the society that always wants new things. So everybody has to change their minds so we can change the society." Her insights show the strong influence structure has on the agent's actions. Being part of a group and being socially accepted was very important for the informants. Only if others changed will we change - was the dominant attitude amongst the participants. Instead of being leaders of change, the informants seemed to be followers. The majority felt they were dependant on what information was given to them, except for two informants who believed in the consumers' power to bring change. The majority said the more information they get about how to be sustainable, the more they will follow.

Some of the participants also described how it was impossible to avoid not following the latest trends in clothing. One university student (age 23, Chinese Studies student), explained that at times she may not like something at first but after some time if she

saw it repeatedly on others or in advertisements she ended up purchasing the item. What was perhaps most interesting to note was when I asked each of the informants to describe their sense of style. They all started by saying that they had their own styles. Yet, when they described it, fourteen out of sixteen used the words “simple, classic and comfortable.” Not only did they dress in a similar manner, but more than 70 percent of them shopped at the same retail outlets. Therefore, showing that tastes and preferences are socially determined (Bourdieu 1990).

Furthermore, the collected data contradicts Giddens analysis. In Giddens view consumers have individuality of agency and are also capable of thinking for themselves. Which is why, he believes, it is not easy to allure consumers into buying a particular product. “They’re not simply or directly manipulated by the desire of the advertiser” (Giddens 2003, p.390). However, my interviews with not only the sixteen consumers but also the five sustainable fashion designers showed otherwise. The power of influencing the consumer through advertising in popular media such as television, fashion magazines, etc was well acknowledged by the designers. The sheer lack of advertising about sustainable clothing, on their part was also quoted as their biggest challenge. When comparing their marketing budgets and turnover rates to that of the bigger brands, a sharp contrast could be seen. Having small turnovers because of limited marketing shows that advertising has a strong hold on the agent’s action. Interestingly, many of the informants also suggested that if more Norwegian celebrities were to start supporting sustainable and eco lines, more people will follow. For example, one informant (age 23, Chinese Studies student), when discussing ways to encourage buying clothes at second hand shops in order to be more sustainable, said the following:

If some famous Norwegian celebrity wears something then people will be encouraged and will follow. More people will realise and get involved with it. In Norway people get influenced easily and follow trends.

This section of the thesis has illustrated the role that the structure of society plays in both shaping consumption, and also hindering sustainable consumption patterns. The data gathered reveals how because of the nature of the society at large consuming less has become a problem for most consumers. In order to be accepted and be part of a group, the individual follows the majority. Therefore, buying cheap and frequently, disposing quickly and washing clothes continuously are all habits and practices formed by the social structure in which the individual has been embedded in. Additionally, the agenda of the big fast fashion brands to sell more at low prices has further led to a pool of misguided consumers who continue to push towards ecologically and ethically questionable lifestyles.

5.3 Consumption as freedom

One of the objectives of this study was to identify and understand why consumption and usage of clothes is not carried out in a sustainable manner. The collected data revealed that a lack of information was the key reason why consumers were locked into their current practices. For example, when describing when or if they checked the label of the clothes, fifteen out of the sixteen respondents said that it was only to see if the clothing was 100 percent wool. They did this in order to stay warm during the cold winters of Norway, and not for any ethical or ecological purposes. Not only were the informants not aware of what ecological and ethical clothing was, they also had little knowledge about using clothes ecologically. The way clothes are used has an equally strong impact on the environment as to the way they are produced. Machine washing clothes after every wear, throwing them away if a damage is detected, shopping for new clothes every two months, rewarding oneself for working hard at

school or work by purchasing more, all reflect unsustainable clothing consumption and usage patterns that were common amongst all the informants. Most of the informants even said they had never thought about sustainable consumption and usage of clothes until now.

They explained that harsh working conditions in the developing countries' factories were topics they had "heard off" but did not know too much about. A majority of the participants explained while shopping for clothes they had never thought of the ecological or ethical impact their purchases had. Therefore, to a certain extent the data supports Bauman's view on the problems of liquid modernity. He describes the presence of a lack of unity, whereby the individuals place their needs before others, thus, losing sight of the "common cause" (Bauman 2001). My data did reveal a general lack of awareness with regards to consequences of consumption. However, it is unfair to say that there was a lack of care or sensitivity towards the environment on the whole. All of the informants said they would willingly purchase clothes from ethical and ecological brands if they were informed. The informants did feel a sense of responsibility however; when in the process of actually shopping they failed to make a connection with sustainability and their clothing consumption. A similar disconnect was seen between usage of clothes and its impact on the environment when the informants described their washing and disposal practices.

The gap that exists between the awareness level, attitudes towards the environment and subsequent behaviour of the informants, is due to the lack of information. Not having enough knowledge has locked them into continuing with their current ways. The dependence they have on the structure to provide them with this information shows that the individual is not as free as Bauman's description of the post modern consumer. They are free to the extent of picking one outlet of clothing over another. However, they are limited in the sense of selecting from only the provided options.

What they buy is what is available in the stores, what they know is based on what is released by the state or designers. Once again their choices are locked-in, because of the available items and information in the market.

In addition, price has played a major role in restricting consumers from being sustainable. Although low priced, mass produced clothing has allowed for greater affordability giving anyone the chance to enter the market and to become a consumer. Yet, my data revealed that it was precisely because of the ease in which the informants could buy cheap that controlled them as well. Majority of the informants were accustomed to buying more, at a lower price. Investing in good quality, but fewer clothes, was not a common practice. The lock-in created by lower prices, was recognized as a major barrier by the sustainable fashion designers interviewed for this study as well. Most of the designers spoke about the difficulties they face in trying to maintain their place in the market. Risks of going into a loss and being driven out of the market are high for the sustainable fashion designers, as they do not offer clothing that is as cheap compared to the bigger fast fashion companies. All of the designers explained how consumers have become “used to” buying cheap. Therefore, even though they were offering sustainable products, their sales are low because the prices they sell at are higher than the mainstream brands. Lower sales have meant lower profits for them which mean lower budgets. This translates into lower marketing and advertising especially in mainstream media such as popular Norwegian women’s magazines like *Henne*, *Costume*, *KK* and so on. It is extremely expensive for the independent sustainable fashion designers to purchase advertising space in these magazines. Furthermore, my interview with Mari Grinde Arntzen revealed that the popular women’s fashion magazines in Norway mainly sold advertisements to well established Swedish, Danish and other international clothing brands. The Norwegian fashion industry is also very small with only a handful of Norwegian designers in the field. The market is dominated by big international labels who can afford to buy

advertisements in these magazines. Therefore, as she explains, the magazines also prefer to sell add spaces to the brands with bigger markets and scope:

Almost none of the fashion shoots in Norwegian fashion magazines are made in Norway because they buy from other countries. It's about making money for them, for example, Costume, its Danish so they collaborate with Norway and Elle buys from international companies (...)the fashion design industry itself in Norway is very small and cannot afford to advertise(..) the main problem is where to buy these clothes (eco and ethical clothing) even I don't know where you can buy sustainable clothes in Norway.

Limited budgets have meant lower marketing for independent sustainable fashion brands, which has led to lack of information for people about not only what are ecologically and ethically sustainable clothes but also of their availability. The dilemma faced by the sustainable fashion designers has meant holding back on vital information consumers need in order to make sustainable choices. Free market structures have, therefore, created perfect grounds for the perpetuation of fast fashion. Not only are the bigger brands preferred by the magazines but they can also afford to advertise in them. Furthermore, by selling at cheap prices, they are able to both create and maintain the scope of their markets. More than fifty percent of the informants said that they usually put price before quality. In other words, quantity trumps quality in today's world. This has also made the disposal of the clothes all the more easier and guilt free. Leading to what can be seen from the data collected-a culture of buying cheap and frequently. Hence, instead of freeing the consumer from the grips of desire, they have been further locked deep into it. Therefore, the paradigm shift needed to alter clothing consumption patterns towards sustainability and the importance of the government's role in raising the banner of sustainable lifestyles, will be addressed in the upcoming conclusion.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to understand *what* forces shape clothing consumption patterns of individuals in Oslo. I also wanted to know *how* aware consumers are of the ecological and ethical impacts their consumption had, and *what* reasons are standing in the way of more sustainable choices and practices. In doing so I wished to contribute to research aimed at making sustainable consumption and usage of clothes a mainstream concept.

It is not ecologically taboo to have an aspiration to adorn one's self in order to feel beautiful or communicate to others about one's identity through clothing. However, when this consumption becomes careless (unethical) that is where the problem arises. As Mari Grinde Arntzen explains: "human beings love beauty and beautiful things (...) It is something we experience and try to experience on our bodies as well (..) I think decorating oneself is one of the nice things about being human. So why make it evil? It is the fast fashion industry and profit driven capitalists who have made it evil!"

My research showed that a majority of the informants purchased clothes for reasons other than purely out of necessity. Using clothes to express their identity was a common way of explaining how they selected clothes. The way they dressed was used to communicate to others about who they were as people. It was very important for all informants across age groups to be sending the right message. Wearing clothing like sports tracks in public was not appreciated on others or on themselves. The desire to be dressed "properly" and also to be accepted by their social group was very important. Although women formed and communicated their identity through clothes, the consumption of it was not strictly limited to just that. Many of the informants especially between the ages of 17-25 followed trends actively. Purchasing

clothes after almost every two months was a common practice amongst them. Surfing websites and flipping through fashion magazines or even window shopping to stay up to date was widely practiced. With changing trends, identities of these young women also seemed to evolve. Some of the informants also mentioned, even if they did not like a new collection at first sight over time they became fond of it and ended up buying it. Bauman (2001) refers to this phenomenon as a “liquid consumer”. He describes how the identity of a post modern consumer has become fluid and is always evolving. The fashion industry through its fast paced production of clothing has only accelerated this further. The term *fast fashion* is now commonly used to describe the rate at which new lines enter the market. Moreover, most of the fast fashion brands have their factories in the global South, because of this, the cost at which they produce is less compared to the smaller more niche sustainable fashion brands mostly based in Europe. As the production levels of fast fashion brands are large the prices they offer to their customers are also low. Therefore, making them popular especially amongst the younger group of informants studied. Furthermore, for more than half of the informants price was more important than quality. It is because of this price lock-in that consumers have become used to buying cheap, especially amongst the young who willingly compromise the quality of the product in favor of quantity.

Additionally, going to the mall and to the city was also a form of entertainment and social practice. The city itself being built around a number of shops had a strong impact on the clothing consumption choices of the informants. The informants mentioned how it was impossible to avoid going in stores every time they were in the city. Which is why, combining family (or friends) time with shopping had become a common and frequent practice. The availability of cheap trendy clothes along with the growing number of clothing stores has also made disposal of clothes all the more easier and guilt free. Most of the informants, although aware of the general meaning of sustainability did not make its connection with clothes when they actually

purchased them. Many of them even admitted to not have thought about where their clothes came from or what went into making them. Furthermore, as clothes are within easy reach and sold at prices affordable to the majority of consumers, the disposal of clothes has become just as easy as its purchase. The connection made with sustainability therefore, lacks both at the time of purchase and disposal. Similarly, washing patterns of the informants also reflected a lack of this connection. Could this then mean that the human brain is incapable of being green?

In the course of my research I realized that the answers to all of the stated problems could be explained by two factors; lack of information and price. The data showed that as the informants were not aware and lacked knowledge, unsustainable lifestyles had become a common practice. Not only are the informants not aware of how their clothes are made or what materials and fabrics are used, they do not even know how to use their clothes sustainably. Due to the complex nature of the textile and apparel industry, transparency of production lines has been a problem for a very long time (Martin 2013). As the production of fast fashion brands occurs in one part of the world while the consumption in another, consumers do not see the ethical and ecological consequences and cannot make a direct connection. This is despite incidents such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in April 2013, where a lot of media attention was gained (Martin 2013, p.1). The public was made aware of the working conditions under which the factories operated. However, my findings revealed that these were issues that informants had heard off but reflected little on.

Furthermore, consumers only have surface level knowledge when it comes to ecological aspect of textiles. As clothes are something that is not directly ingested by the body, the concern over the chemicals used in the dyeing, spinning, weaving to the final packaging of the product is something not thought about. Hence, the connections with health concerns are not made (Petit 2007). This was further reflected when all of

the informants mentioned checking the labels to see if it was 100% wool due to winter requirements, but not to check for the chemical content of the clothing. Likewise, based on my data, there was also little knowledge about what sustainable clothing was and who were selling them in Oslo. None of the informants had heard of any of Norwegian sustainable fashion brands. The informants pointed towards the producers as carrying the responsibility of informing the public. The information gathered from the sustainable fashion designers however, showed that due to the price game the big brands played, the sustainable brands were locked-in. As their budgets were limited they were unable to advertise in popular fashion magazines or advertise on television. Furthermore, as most of their production was based in Europe, the cost of production was higher which was reflected in higher selling prices as compared to the fast fashion brands. In addition to this, their lines were also limited in quantity. In this way they become less popular than the mainstream brands. The designers said only if the demand was to rise, their costs could be met and their prices would be more affordable. However, how can this be done if the consumers do not even know about the existence of sustainable clothing brands? How can consumers be expected to demand and purchase sustainable clothing and look at labels if they do not know what they should be looking for? If standardized certifications qualifying items as being sustainable are not provided, how, then, is the consumer to know?

Even if the consumers were to research on their own to get an understanding of how clothes were made, if the products are not certified, consumers will still not know what to buy. Furthermore, the certifications too need to be made known to the public for them to start thinking this way. The question then arises is whose responsibility is it? What role does the government play in this? What can be done to combat this problem? The government has a vital role to play in matters of sustainability. Based on all the information gathered through this study, it is clear that there is a lack of information amongst the consumers. The solution, however, does not rest in only

informing them about where to buy sustainable products. Rather consumption levels on the whole need to be reduced drastically. Therefore, the government can assist by tackling these issues in the following ways:

Approaching sustainability passively:

One of the biggest reasons why consumption of clothing is on such a high scale is because the prices are very low. The purchasing power of people is very strong in Norway. Therefore, even if the consumer buys seven t-shirts at H&M or Zara, they pay less than quarter of a price in comparison to a good quality sustainable product. Hence, in order to reduce consumption levels and discourage bulk and frequent buying, the government can increase the taxes on fast fashion clothing brands. This money can then be used to subsidize the sustainable fashion designers clothes. Thus, bringing an equilibrium or close to an equilibrium of prices between the sustainable and non sustainable brands. When the price of low quality but trendy products goes up, it will no longer be economical to invest in an item that will either lose its shape after three washes or go out of style in three months. As a result, the consumer will be steered in the direction of better quality products. In time purchasing high quality, but few pieces of clothing to be used repeatedly will become a wide scale practice. Fast fashion will then be replaced by *slow fashion*. The term “slow fashion” was coined by Kate Fletcher (2007), who defines it as follows: “Slow fashion is about designing, producing, consuming and living better. Slow fashion is not time-based but quality-based (which has some time components). Slow is not the opposite of fast – there is no dualism – but a different approach in which designers, buyers, retailers and consumers are more aware of the impacts of products on workers, communities and ecosystems”(The Ecologist).

When discussing the importance of the role of the government with Tone Skårdal Tobiasson, project manager for NICE (Norwegian Initiative Clean and Ethical Fashion) she had the following to say:

The government should cut half the VAT for fair trade clothing. The government earns 25% on everything you buy so they should take some responsibility in skewing consumption.

In addition to this, the government can also levy taxes aimed at popular Norwegian fashion magazines. The government can use the money to finance the creation of a similar styled eco-fashion magazine, where local sustainable fashion designers are given the opportunity to advertise their collections. Each month an influential Norwegian celebrity can be used to model the cover of the magazine. Furthermore, the monthly magazine can also provide a spread on different aspects of sustainability, in ways that appeal to the aesthetics of the consumer. However, what is of prime importance is the way in which the message is communicated to the public. In the article titled “Enemies of Sustainability? The Empire of Vogue” by Nina Witoszek, she employs semiotics to analyse reasons for the continual success of the fashion magazine *Vogue*. Witoszek describes how through the “power of seduction” most fashion magazines are able to tap into human desires (Witoszek 2012, p.132). If stimulated correctly, magazines can act as powerful tools of mobilizing consumer actions in the direction of the advertisers’ message. It is then suggested, that eco-magazines can also learn from the examples of high end magazines and employ “sexier green narratives” in order to effectively market themselves as well (Witoszek 2012, p.132).

Moreover, the government through the provision financial incentives for organizations such as, *The Nordic Fashion Association* and *NICE Fashion*, can help to encourage more work aimed at addressing ethical and ecological issues in textile industry. In this way research and development and innovation in production of

textiles in a safe and ethical manner will also be promoted. However, in order to ensure the efficient implementation of green policies these organizations also must reach out and encourage the sustainable fashion designers to work in close collaboration with them. Furthermore, the consumer too can be involved in the process by equipping them with the knowledge on how to address issues related to the proper wash, care and prolonged use of their clothes (Nordic Fashion Association 2014). Hence, through government intervention and support the cause of altering consumer lifestyles in a sustainable direction will be given a fair chance at survival. Furthermore, the gap between sustainable production and consumption of clothes will be successfully bridged.

Approaching sustainability actively:

Government financed national level campaigns aimed at informing the public on various topics related to sustainability and clothes, is one way to actively approach the issue. However, if done in a creative manner it will perhaps generate more response than if carried out an authoritative way. As mentioned before, Norwegian celebrities can be used for the campaigns running every two months with a different message each time. The primary focus being on reducing consumption levels on the whole. Also encouraging people to consume less, wash less, re-use old clothes, and ask more questions about how their clothes are made. Additionally, consumers also need to be made aware of the properties of different fabrics and the toxicity of textiles. For example, fabrics such as wool, viscose, modal, do not require washing and can be cleaned by simply air drying them. Once people start adopting this large amount of CO₂ and water can be saved (Fletcher 2008). Information can be dispensed to the public in creative ways through entertaining yet informative advertisements. In addition to this, there is a need for a standardized certification of clothing. The EU flower and Swan Mark (Nordic Eco label) although are used but knowledge of them is

lacking amongst the public (Austgulen and Stø 2013). Therefore, efforts must be made in order to standardize certification and make them widely known. This way people will get into the habit of looking for clothing that are certified.

Furthermore, the government also has a vital role to play in the kind of information and knowledge being shared through the education system. Therefore, the government if sets directives for the ministries of education and the environment to work in partnership together, a rich curricula on sustainable life styles has the potential to be introduced and inculcated into the school system. The importance of education in altering mindsets, although a long term process, can be best described by the following quote: “One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world. Education is the only solution. Education First” (Malala Yousafzai July 2013).

Other suggestions to inform the public are aimed at the producers. During my interviews most of the producers stated they did not use sustainability as a major selling point. However, such strategic moves to protect their market only hinder the consumer from being sustainable. Therefore, producers could opt for in-store advertising. My research shows that the layout of the store and the messages such as, banners in the store highly influenced consumer decisions. Designers could then have posters that show how the clothes were made, how the consumer can care for the clothes, what they can do if the clothing is torn. Such information can be communicated in an inspiring way by setting up posters within the store, especially closer to the cash counter. The data from this research showed that while standing in line to pay many of the consumers read the posters on the wall. Moreover, the role of the sales staff is also vital which is why they too can be trained with having relevant knowledge about the clothes and their usage.

The importance of communicating information about the ethical and ecological impact of mass consumption of clothing to the public was also mentioned by Tone Skårðal Tobiasson, when she said:

The consumer cannot fix the factory in Bangladesh. They can boycott H&M, but it doesn't make a difference, it only makes the consumer feel frustrated. But if you can point the consumer towards something that is not frustrating, but can make a difference then the consumer is empowered again and feels they are making a difference. Therefore, we can tell them to look at what the labels say and show them that if by airing their clothes instead of washing them they will save this much amount of CO₂, water, throughout the year. Then the consumer will feel and say-okay this is very simple, I can do this!

However, none of the suggestions can be successful if all of the stakeholders involved do not hop on the sustainability bandwagon together. Policy makers should not put the burden of sustainability solely onto the shoulders of the consumers. Structural forces beyond the reach of the individual such as the state, policies regarding production, trade, advertising, civil society actions, all have an equal part to play in the fight against unsustainable life styles. Redefining the very concept of “a good life” needs to be communicated to the masses in an effective manner. “People are subjected to pervasive marketing efforts of business whereas consumers have a limited power of consumer actions against certain products, brands or firms” (Sanne 2002, p.281). Consumers seem to be caught up in a web of forces beyond their control. Certain decisions are taken by them in order to be functioning members of a society. However, they too should be active reflective agents, and not wait for everybody to change first. They must start with themselves and from their own households. It is important that they also realize that they are equal stakeholders in this process, very much as in other similar domains. Although the structure of society does play a role in defining boundaries for the individual agent, the agent too plays a vital role in maintaining those boundaries. Nothing operates in a vacuum or in isolation. Every aspect of the society is linked, no one part can survive without the other (Giddens

2003). Therefore, in order for change to effectively take place and social values and practices to alter, each node in the web of relations needs to work for it. Only then can the focus be changed, the right questions be asked and a move in the right direction be made possible.

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Appendix I: List of participants

#	Description	Gender	Age	Civil Status
1	High school student-Elvebakken VGS,Oslo	Female	17	Single
2	High school student-Elvebakken VGS,Oslo	Female	18	Single
3	High school student-Elvebakken VGS,Oslo	Female	18	Single
4	High school student-Elvebakken VGS,Oslo	Female	18	Single
5	High school student-Elvebakken VGS,Oslo	Female	18	Single
6	High school student-Elvebakken VGS,Oslo	Female	18	Single
7	High school student-Elvebakken VGS,Oslo	Female	18	Single
8	University student-Law student	Female	20	Single
9	University student-Chinese studies student	Female	23	Single
10	University student-Nurse student	Female	23	Single
11	University student-Library and	Female	24	Single

	Informatics science student			
12	University student-and Green Peace member	Female	25	Single
13	University student- and fashion blogger	Female	24	Single
14	House wife	Female	40	Married
15	House wife-work from home interior designer	Female	50	Married
16	House wife-pensioner	Female	60	Married
17	Sustainable fashion designer/brand-Leila Hafzi	Female	N/A	N/A
18	Sustainable fashion designer/brand- Nina Skarra	Female	N/A	N/A
19	Sustainable fashion designer/brand-Re-think Designs	Female	N/A	N/A
20	Sustainable fashion designer/brand- M.A Garderobe	Female	N/A	N/A
21	Sustainable fashion designer/brand- <i>Håvarstein couture</i>	Female	N/A	N/A
22	Sustainable fashion retail outlet-Velbevare	Female	N/A	N/A
23	Brand marketing and sales head-	Male	N/A	N/A

	Torstein Skarra			
24	Project manager-Tone SkårdalTobiasson (NICE)	Female	N/A	N/A
25	Author-Mari GrindeArntzen	Female	N/A	N/A

Appendix II: Participant Information Sheet

Project Title:Clothes and the Environment

Invitation

You are cordially being invited to take part in a research study for a Master thesis conducted by Marium Durrani, a student of the University of Oslo and supervised by Nina Witoszek. The thesis is a two part research aimed at studying the relations between clothes and the environment. The first part will take an in depth look at the consumption of clothing in everyday life by tracing forces and factors that might help explain how consumption is shaped, carried out and continued in a society. The second part of the study will involve an analysis of the productive patterns of clothing by understanding the means through which clothes are produced and subsequently marketed.

Participant's Rights

In this study, you will be asked to take part in an in depth interview which will consist of 20-22 questions. The information gathered will solely be used for the purpose of the thesis. You as the informant have the following rights:

- Right to decline participation
- Right to withdraw from the study at any time
- Right to have privacy (confidentiality will be assured)
- Right to have audio or video devices turned off at any time
- Right to ask questions about the study at any time
- Right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you
- Right to receive information about the research results and conclusions

A complete debriefing of these rights will be made once again before the interview commences. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

Time Commitment

The interview on average will take between 40 minutes to one hour. Depending on the answers and discussion generated and availability of the informant the time is flexible to change. The interview will be a single session interview and if allowed by the informant a follow up interview date can be set.

Benefits and Risks

There are no known benefits or risks for you in this study.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

The data collected will not contain any personal information about you except your age bracket, civil status and highest educational degree achieved to date. No one will link the data you provided to the identifying information you supplied (e.g., name, address, email or phone number). The primary purpose of collecting this data is to formulate correlations in the Masters thesis between various factors that help explain the relation between consumption and production of clothes with the environment.

For Further Information

Nina Witoszek, will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact her at: n.w.m.witoszek@sum.uio.no

If you want to find out about the final results of this study, you may email at: mariumd@student.hf.uio.no

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

Participant's Name*

Participant's signature*

Date

MARIUM DURRANI

Name of person obtaining consent

Signature of person obtaining consent

**Participants wishing to preserve some degree of anonymity may use their initials*

Appendix III: Interview Guide#1Consumers

First of all I would like to say thank you for your participation in this interview. The goal of this interview is to gain a deeper understanding of how and why consumer's shop for clothes. I will make sure that all information discussed during this interview is fully anonymous, such that no name is mentioned in the written drafts of the research.

Brief introduction:

1. Would you like to tell me a little bit about yourself (age, education background, civil status)

General shopping patterns:

1. How often would you say you shop for clothes?
2. Which clothing stores (brands/labels) do you prefer to shop at?
3. Where in the city do you prefer to shop (location wise)?

Specific factors that influence consumer choices:

1. What factors would you say might have an influence or might prompt you into picking the outlets mentioned?
2. Do you normally shop with somebody or alone?
3. Is it something at the spur of the moment or is a day normally set aside just for shopping?
4. When buying clothes what do you think makes the most difference to you and comes first?
5. How much time on average do you spend on deciding what to wear?
6. Is it important for you to be dressed in a certain manner?
7. Would you say you wear your clothes or you clothes wear you?
8. Do owning expensive clothes play an important part in your life? Is there a certain allure to the consumption of luxury goods (Veblen's Conspicuous consumption).

9. When you go to shop for say a pair of jeans is that the only thing you come out with?
10. How do you feel after shopping?
11. Would you say shopping is a mood changer?
12. How important is the price of clothes?

Knowledge and awareness of ecological foot print:

- 1 How often do you look at the label of the clothes to see where it is made and what goes into its making?
- 2 To what extent do you trust the information given on labels clothes?
- 3 A lot of designers and brands have recently introduced eco or green clothing lines. What is the first thing that comes to you mind when you think of sustainable fashion(eco/green clothing)?
- 4 They say fashion and sustainability can never go hand in hand. What would be your view on that?
- 5 Would you say the information on eco labels is sufficient to make informed purchases?
- 6 How many eco brands do you know of? Do you make your purchases from them?
- 7 What do you do with your old clothes?
- 8 How often do you wash clothes? By hand or machine?
- 9 Have you ever purchased clothes at the vintage/second hand shops in Oslo?

Barriers to sustainable consumption

1. Why do you think non eco clothes are more popular? Commercial prices design alterations?
2. What can be done to increase sustainable life styles and purchases?
3. Do you think more needs to be done in order to inform the public?
4. How important is the role of government in all of this?
5. How successful do you think such policies can be?

6. To sum up what do you think people need to do or can do in order improve their consumption habits of clothes?

Appendix IV: Interview Guide#2Sustainable fashion designers/retailer

First of all I would like to say thank you for your participation in this interview. The goal of this interview is to gain a deeper understanding of your work and the challenges you face. And also discuss with you ways of making sustainable fashion more widespread.

Brief introduction

1. Could you tell me a little bit about your business? (your philosophy, when you started)
2. How did the idea come to you?
3. What does sustainable fashion mean to you?
4. Ethical fashion covers a range of issues such as working conditions, child labor, fair trade and sustainable production. How do you address all these issues?

Challenges designers face

1. What would you say are some of the obstacles in creating more sustainable products?

Addressing consumer identified barriers to sustainable consumption

2. Many people still think of eco/sustainable fashion as baggy clothes made of hemp – what are you doing to change that perception?
3. What would you say is most alarming about how textile mills produce fabric?
4. Do you think that ethics and sustainability are just a trend for the fashion industry? or is actual work being done to make a difference?
5. How aware would you say consumers are about the impact their purchase have on the environment?
6. What can the producers/designers/retailers do in order to increase their awareness?

7. It is usually said that advertising/marketing and sustainability are at complete odds with one another. How would you react to that?
8. What is more important best price vs best practices?
9. When designing what holds more precedence style of sustainability. How are they both be used in the same equation?
10. Most consumers complain that buying from eco clothes outlets is rather costly and so they opt for cheaper alternatives. Why do think such is the case.
11. What can be done to reduce prices of eco clothes?
12. How can marketing as a tool be used to encourage eco clothing?
13. Why is it that brands like H&M, Vero Moda, Lindex are more popular than small independent more eco friendly brands?(Is it bcuz consumers are not aware they operate, lack of marketing , expensive clothes they sell etc)

Suggestions on being sustainable

1. What are some of the things you do in your everyday life to improve the environment?
2. How are your products being packaged?
3. To which degree can designers contribute in turning waste into material resources, and what is the potential for up-scaling niche innovations in to mass production?
4. Do you plan to diversify your range by producing every day wear as well? (if not then why)
5. I noticed there are no prices on the products displayed on your website. Is that a conscious part of your marketing strategy?

Future plans/goals:

1. How do you see your label/store evolving in the future?
2. What is the role of political authorities can play in overcoming barriers for change and how can they stimulate the reduction of the material flow?
3. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix IV: Interview Guide# 3 Mari Grinde Arntzen, Fashion School of Oslo

First of all I would like to say thank you for your participation in this interview. The goal of this interview is to gain a deeper of consumption and sustainable fashion.

Consumption in a historical perspective

1. What role in your opinion has the historical and societal context played in determining consumption practices and habits of Oslo consumers?

Consumption as a practice

2. Is it possible that consumption may be the result of peer pressure and popular culture?
Do we consume because we as individuals want to or because our social circle expects us to?
3. Do we have the freedom to choose or are we in fact enslaved by the very choice we have been given? Can we distinguish between the two.
4. In doing so are we trying to maintain a certain standing in society (Veblin's "conspicuous consumption")? How much agency does an individual truly have in deciding its purchases free from structural and societal forces?
5. Do clothes have an active agency? What role do they play in forming the practice of consumption?

Consumption as a sign

6. Is consumption of clothing an expression of personal identity, taste and values or are we just following trends?
7. How do people make sense of the world through material objects such as clothes?
Can clothing possess the power to enable social change, e.g. recent ban on fur in the Oslo fashion week?

8. Do clothes as material objects and the social practice of consumption reinforce each other and feed off of one another?

Clothes and the Environment

1. Recently there has been a lot of movement in the fashion industry towards the production of what is called eco clothing or green clothing. How would you define green clothes?
2. Recently H&M announced they have signed the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement and the Norwegian for Consumer Affairs. How successful do you think this move towards "the race towards best practice" as opposed to "the race for the cheapest prices" will be (If not then why).
3. They say fashion and sustainability can never go hand in hand what would be your view on that.
4. Why do you think there is a discrepancy between what is actually being consumed and what is being produced? I mean organic clothes are in the market however little is known of them amongst the general public, Norway too has produced a handful of eco designers such as Leila Haifizi, Veronica Glistch with her Rethink Collection, Nina Shara. How do you think this problem can be tackled?
5. Why are they not gaining popularity amongst the larger public? What might be the reasons for this?
6. Why can't green clothes be made mainstream?

Barriers to sustainable consumption of clothes

7. What factors in your opinion hinder its success. Does the fault lie at the production end or consumption?
8. Is it because the move towards green production is just another fashion trend?
9. What role does education play in all of this? Do you feel young design students need training and awareness in green and sustainable production. What courses does your school offer.

10. What more in your opinion can designers do to perpetuate the flow of green designs in the markets?

Appendix V: Interview Guide# 4 Tone Skårdal Tobiasson project manager for NICE (Norwegian Initiative Clean and Ethical Fashion)

First of all I would like to say thank you for your participation in this interview. The goal of this interview is to gain a deeper of your work, clothing consumption patterns and sustainable fashion in Oslo.

Brief Introduction

1. Could you tell me a little bit about the philosophy behind NICE
2. How did the idea come to you?
3. How does NICE address the tenants of sustainable fashion?

Challenges faced

1. What would you say are the major obstacles faced in making sustainable consumption and production of apparel more widespread?

Addressing barriers to sustainable fashion

1. How can the aforementioned challenges be addressed?
2. What would you say is most alarming about how textile mills produce fabric?
3. Do you think that ethics and sustainability is just a trend?
4. How aware would you say consumers are about the impact their purchase have on the environment?
5. What are Norwegian designers doing in order to address sustainable fashion?
6. It is usually said that advertising/marketing and sustainability are at complete odds with one another. How would you react to that?
7. How can high prices that come with eco-clothing be addressed?
8. How can marketing as a tool be used to encourage eco clothing?
9. What role can the government play in all of this?

10. Can you tell me a little bit about the Valuing Norwegian Wool Project?
11. What role does NICE play in supporting small scale sustainable fashion designers/brands?
12. How can eco-clothing be made more mainstream?

Future plans/goals:

1. How do you see NICE evolving in the future?
2. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix VI: Official letter

UiO : University of Oslo
Centre for Development and the Environment

Date: 29 October 2013

Confirmation of field research

I hereby confirm that Marium Durrani, born 26 March 1987, is conducting interviews in relation to her Master's thesis project "*Sustainable consumption and production of clothes in Oslo*" during the autumn of 2013.

Durrani will with this project conclude a Master's degree in *Culture Environment and Sustainability* at Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo.

We appreciate any assistance you can provide her in that regard!

Sincerely,


Anne-Line Sandaker
Adm. Head of Studies

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Centre for Development and The Environment
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NO-0317 Oslo, Norway



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